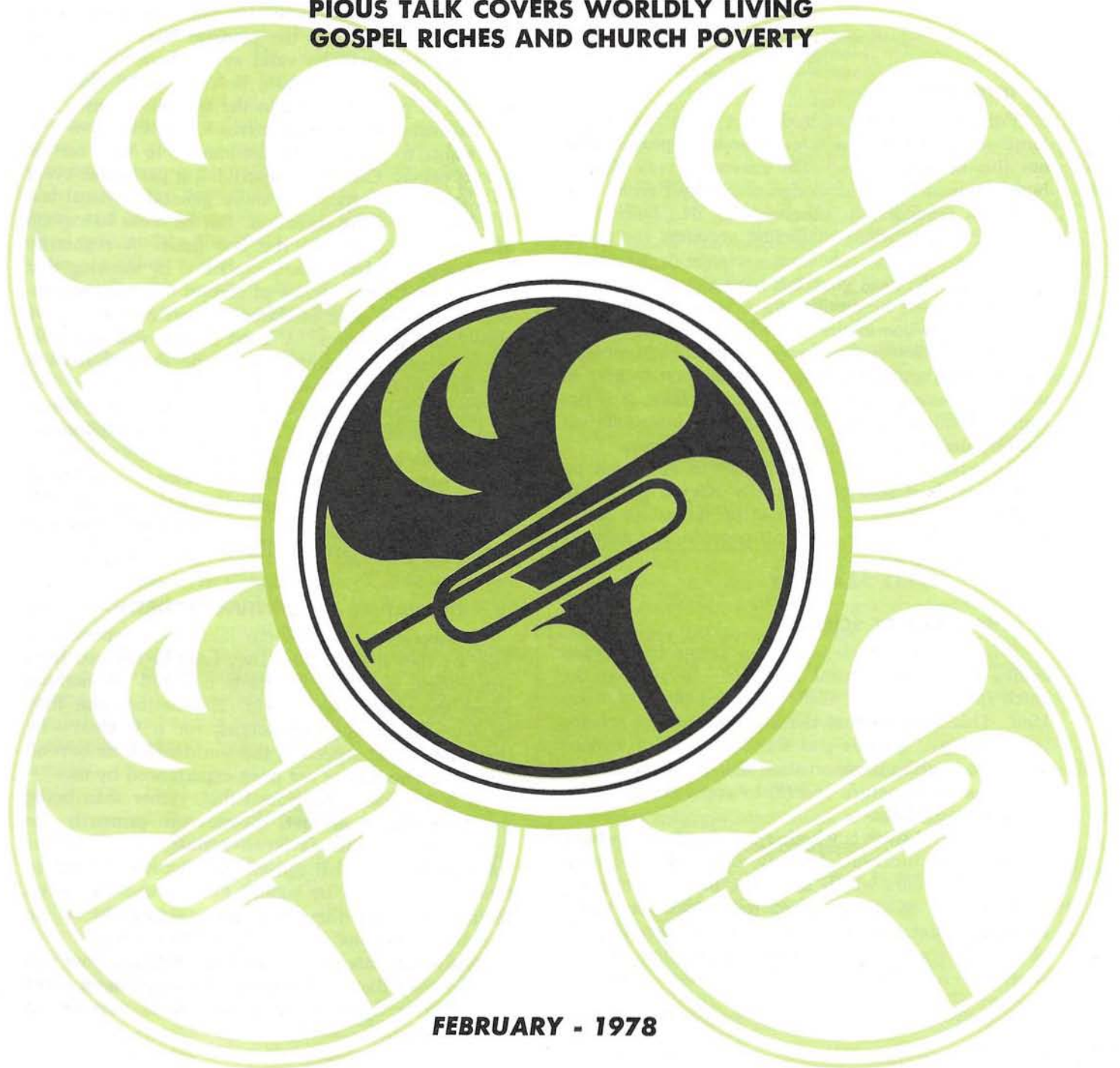


The Outlook

**SCIENCE AND TRUTH
PIOUS TALK COVERS WORLDLY LIVING
GOSPEL RICHES AND CHURCH POVERTY**



FEBRUARY - 1978

DEVOTED TO THE EXPOSITION AND DEFENSE OF THE REFORMED FAITH

science and truth

JOHN BYL

"Any excursion by science beyond the observable facts must rely on theory and is thus open to question."

"We can accept the methods and claims of science only as long as they do not contradict the higher authority of Scripture. When such conflicts occur, we must humbly submit our thoughts to God's Word. . . ."

I. INTRODUCTION

For the last four hundred years there has been a tense struggle between science and Scripture. Why has this been the case? The reason is very simple: both claim to have knowledge of reality beyond that which is immediately observed by us. Difficulties arise, of course, when conflicting accounts are given. Which are we then to believe — science or Scripture?

Historically, most churches have slowly but surely allowed science to modify their view of Scripture. Our church is one of the few who have long resisted this trend. Recently, however, there has been increasing pressure within our own denomination to give in to the presumed authority of science. Thus, it is becoming fashionable to suggest that our interpretation of Scripture is subject to correction by science.

To what extent may science sit in judgment on Scripture? Is it possible to justify science's claim to truth? Let's briefly re-examine the nature of scientific knowledge to see if it can provide any answers to these important questions.

II. THE GOALS OF SCIENCE

Why do we do science? Our prime justification comes from the cultural mandate — to subdue the earth for the glory of God and the benefit of mankind. This suggests that the ultimate goal of science is technology. To this end the objectives of science are (1) to study (via observation and experimentation) the structure of nature and (2) to apply the resulting knowledge usefully.

The central issue is whether science does not have an additional function. Namely, to provide information about events which have not been directly experienced by us. Can science tell us with certainty anything about the past, future or unobserved parts of the universe? This is the crucial question. To answer it we must first examine the methods of science.

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III. THE METHODS OF SCIENCE

How do scientists arrive at their conclusions? In order to understand the physical universe, science must start with our experiences of that universe. Since these are acquired through our senses (e.g., by seeing, hearing, etc.) they are often referred to as "sense-data." The scientist's first task is to collect and record such experienced sense-data.

As this will usually yield a large number of basic observed facts, the next step is to examine the data for any distinct patterns or regularities. These are what we call "physical laws." The discovery of such laws permits us to summarize our experiences in a much more economical form.

Now comes the important step. The scientist wants to use his limited number of facts to learn about those facts of the world which he has not observed. He can do this only by making certain assumptions (or "theories") about the world. The most used theory is the assumption that the physical laws we observe here and now will be valid everywhere and always (i.e., the theory that nature is "uniform"). This permits us to predict events in the future (or past).

However, the scientist strives to do more than this. He wants to provide explanations as to why certain events occur. Certainly, describing a particular event as a specific instance of a more general physical law is a first step in this direction. But he seeks to explain also the occurrence of the law itself. A regularity expressed by a law is then explained by showing that it holds as a consequence of certain other, more general laws or of more fundamental and comprehensive theoretical principles. A good theory will not only allow previously known laws to be derived from it but leads to the discovery of new laws.

One of the foremost objectives of science is, therefore, to develop theories which will thus explain the regularities expressed by general laws.

In summary, it is seen that science consists of primarily three parts: (1) collecting data (2) using this data to determine physical laws and (3) extending and explaining these laws via theories.

IV. THE NATURE OF SCIENTIFIC THEORIES

If theories go beyond our immediate experiences, how are they discovered? They can't be derived from strict logic, for that by itself can tell us nothing about the unobserved world. But neither can they be found from our experiences, for it is clear — by definition — that aspects of the world which lie beyond our experiences have not been experienced by us.

It is generally recognized that, rather than being based on reason or fact, theories are primarily the product of a scientist's creative imagination. Or, as some prefer to call it, intuition. Theories are not so much given to us by nature as imposed by us on nature. Perhaps they are more accurately to be termed "inventions" rather than "discoveries."

Naturally, this poses a serious problem: how can we know whether any theory used to explain an event does in fact agree with reality? It is possible, in

principle, to construct any number of theories capable of explaining facts already known. How can we find the correct one? New observations may prove some theories to be false. We can thus eliminate these. However, the possibility always remains that further evidence may likewise exclude any remaining theory. Hence no theory can ever be proved by science to be certain.

Nevertheless, scientists do feel that some theories are more probably true than others. When choosing among competing theories, all consistent with the observed facts, science will generally prefer the simplest (or, perhaps, the most beautiful, or useful). But why should a simple theory be more likely to be true than a complex one? Neither logic nor experience compel us to accept any particular theory, consistent with observed facts, as being more (or less) "true" than others. This choice is made purely on philosophical grounds.

Of course, as long as we are concerned only with the practical aspect of science, it really doesn't matter whether a theory is "true" or not. The main thing then is that they be useful. They can be very important as convenient calculating devices which enable us to make new predictions, to represent known laws, and to suggest new ones. Simple theories are then preferred on the obvious grounds that such theories are easier to use.

The "truth" question becomes a problem only when we want to learn about parts of nature unobserved by us. Since we are not obliged to consider any scientific theory as anything more than a useful fiction, it follows that the ability of science to provide realistic answers must be severely limited. Indeed, history testifies that the road to scientific "truth" is richly paved with abandoned theories.

V. SCIENCE AND SCRIPTURE

This conclusion regarding scientific theories is very important for it demands that we distinguish sharply between "fact" and "theory." Any excursion by science beyond the observable facts must rely on theory and is thus open to question.

It is noteworthy that the traditional confrontations of Scripture by science have generally been situations where Biblical statements regarding reality were challenged on the basis of scientific *theoretical* speculation rather than simple *facts*. Consider some classic examples:

- (1) The Copernican revolution supposedly disproved the belief that the universe revolves about a stationary earth. Yet all we can possibly observe is the *relative* rotation of the sky with respect to the earth. The facts alone do not allow us to decide which is moving in an absolute sense.
- (2) Geology supposedly disproved the belief that the world is only some 6000 years old. Yet all we can observe are present land formations and elemental abundances. These facts alone say nothing about the past.

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).

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Similarly, for paleontology and archaeology the observed facts — fossils and artifacts — themselves reveal nothing about the past. Nature is not necessarily a textbook of history.

In all these cases the scientific conclusions at issue are due, not to the observed facts, but to the theories used to explain the facts. A study of nature, as we have seen, can yield direct knowledge only of the *present, observable* structure of the universe. Hence, Biblical evidence is questioned not because it conflicts with facts, but because it conflicts with scientific theory.

We need not be surprised that science so often conflicts with Scripture. Theories can reliably describe only the facts upon which they are based. They can do no more than guess as to what may take place outside these limits. Since the secular scientist's set of facts generally does not include Scriptural evidence, it is hardly to be expected that his theoretical speculation will agree with such evidence. On the contrary, the failure of science to reproduce Biblical data merely serves to illustrate the pitiful inadequacy of man's theorizing.

VI. THE BIBLICAL EVIDENCE

Clearly, science is in a position to judge Scripture only if it can be shown that when conflicts arise, the Bible is even less reliable than scientific theory. For those who believe the Bible to be the *infallible* Word of God this is, of course, an extremely difficult task. Nevertheless, such attempts have been made. In general, this involves either (1) questioning the interpretation of Scripture or (2) limiting Biblical authority.

Arguments along the first line are usually based on the premise that, while Scripture may well be infallible, our human interpretations of it certainly are not. Hence, we should allow enough leeway to accommodate interpretations compatible with science.

In response to this it must be pointed out that we must apply consistent, objective rules of interpretation. Otherwise Scripture will become merely a reflection of our own biases. Reformed hermeneutics has, therefore, always insisted that Scripture must be its own interpreter. This demands literal interpretations unless *internal* evidence dictates otherwise.

A similar criticism may be directed against the second approach. For if we are to somehow limit Biblical authority, how are we to decide what is and what is not authoritative? Again, we must have objective criteria. But since we can't decide beforehand on what aspects the Bible is going to speak truthfully, these limits can only come from Scripture itself. Otherwise we are again in the position of being willing to listen only to that which is agreeable to us. However, Scripture gives no hint that its authority is in any way limited.

It is, therefore, hard to see how we can possibly allow science to "correct" our interpretation of Scripture without thereby denying Scripture to be *God's* Word.

VII. CONCLUSION

Regardless of how well scientific theories may explain the world, we have seen that there is no reason why we should consider them to be more than merely convenient, human inventions. Scripture conflicts not with observed facts, but only with theories devised to explain these facts.

Consequently, clashes between science and Scripture ultimately reduce to clashes between man's thoughts and God's Word. They are the result of man's foolish unwillingness to bow before God. For is it not, to say the least, arrogant to think that the interpretation of God's Word is subject to correction by our human theoretical speculation?

Are we then to cease our scientific theorizing? Certainly not! On the contrary, insofar as theories aid us in fulfilling the cultural mandate we must make use of them. If certain theories help us to subdue and control nature — fine, use them! We must, however, always be careful to avoid the temptation to equate our theories with truth.

We can accept the methods and claims of science only as long as they do not contradict the higher authority of Scripture. When such conflicts occur, we must humbly submit our thoughts to God's Word and modify our views accordingly.

PIOUS TALK COVERS WORLDLY LIVING



REV. JELLE TUINGA

Now that social dancing has been introduced at Calvin College, with all kinds of plausible and non-plausible argumentation, it is well that we just go back a few years and have another look at what we did in 1966 in adopting the up-dated report on the Film Arts, and the practical consequences of it.

You see, that report itself is quite good, and I can

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quite readily find myself in its basic thrust. It delineates quite well what ought to be our Christian attitude toward, and responsibility overagainst, the film arts.

However, as everybody knows, but very few like to admit, we aren't doing much at all with those nice-sounding principles and high ideals found in the report. For example, synod said with respect to the "familiar trio," theater-attendance, dancing and card-playing, that "it greatly deplores the increasing prevalence among us of these forms of amusement and urgently warns our members against them." Synod exhorted "all our leaders to warn unceasingly against the prevailing spirit and forms of wordliness," and to deal "firmly with all cases of misdemeanor and offensive conduct in the matter of amusements." Synod furthermore said that "the Christian should reject and condemn the message of those film arts products which sanction sin and subvert the Christian interpretation of life" (cf. Spaan, *Christian Reformed Church Government*, pp. 147ff for this).

Good admonitions, no doubt. But have we been putting them into practice? Synod deplored the increasing prevalence of theater-attendance and dancing. Has there been a decrease in these practices since that time? Everyone knows there has not been; instead, now we are saying: Let's implement dancing among ourselves ("Christian" dancing, of course). Another capitulation to the prevailing spirit of our age? I'm afraid so.

The reason I think so is the way we approach these matters. We approach them from the standpoint of expediency rather than principle. Oh yes, we then discover and propound all kinds of nice principles to back up our expediency, but expediency it remains all the same.

For what is the case? The case is that before 1966 it was discovered by way of a survey that two-thirds of our young people were attending the theater on a regular basis. So in order to deal with that bad situation, we neatly skirted the real issue and produced a report which made room for a *qualified* theater-attendance. Fine, except, of course, that neither before nor after were the young people doing this on a qualified basis. They were attending indiscriminately, and have, by and large, been doing so ever since.

So what was the net result of the 1966 Report? A free ticket to attend the theater, as the Rev. J. B. Hulst once said soon after the adoption of the report. He was right. We simply *legalized* the status quo. We simply gave our (qualified, to be sure) approval to what was already happening.

The problem remained. And it remains today. We produced a new report, but not a new situation. We should have issued a strong plea for repentance from gross wordliness, but we issued a nicely-worded but impotent report instead.

Now we're doing the very same thing with the dance. We begin with the expediency angle again: The students at Calvin are dancing, so now we may as well find a way to condone it, and, hopefully, improve it. So along comes another nicely-worded, prin-

cipial-sounding report from the Board of Trustees. But everyone knows we lost the battle before we ever began. However, no one is going to say that. We keep putting our heads in the sand, hoping the problem will somehow go away. But it won't, and there's no use pretending it will. I admire the integrity and "guts" of the student who had the honesty to write:

They justify dancing at Calvin by saying that it will be creative, educational and to the glory of God. This is a real joke for many of us who know that dancing is done for enjoyment, for entertainment, and not for its creative or educational values. No matter how many good intentions the Board of Trustees has, dancing will always be just that, at Calvin, or anywhere else.

That student hit the nail on the head. We all know he's right, but of course, we're not going to admit it. We're going to stick to our "principles" instead.

So what do our young people see on the screen? Well, here is a sample of what they're seeing, taken at random from a local newspaper:

MATURE: Some simulated sex and brutality.

MATURE: Some swearing and coarse language.

RESTRICTED: Drugs and very coarse language.

Contains a very crude song.

MATURE: Frequent violence.

MATURE: Some violence.

RESTRICTED: Warning: Brutal rape and violence.

RESTRICTED: Brutal violence and coarse language.

RESTRICTED: Violent scenes.

MATURE: Sex comedy.

RESTRICTED: Several violent and brutal scenes.

RESTRICTED: Some nudity and swearing.

RESTRICTED: Brutality and rape.

Well, what happens to our nice "principles" in the light of this? They disappear into thin air. Because we have to deal with the nitty-gritty of real, practical life. And we see what's going on among our young people. And then all those fine theories and dandy principles don't amount to a hill of beans. There's only one clear, biblical thing to tell our young people in the light of this: You have no business as a Christian to attend these shows at all. And if you do attend "on a regular basis," we sincerely question your commitment to the Lord and will have to take disciplinary measures! There's no other avenue open to those who are sincere in their Christian commitment and want to avoid every form of evil and to do all, whether in word or deed, in the name of the Lord Jesus.

Is it going to be different with dancing? I have my doubts. Knowing human nature, and knowing that Christian liberty "can be fully exercised only by those who are mature," I doubt whether the social dance at Calvin or anywhere else is going to enhance our spiritual life or be done to the glory of God. If I'm wrong, I'd like someone to show me how and where.

gospel riches and church poverty

PETER DE JONG

(Continued)

2. A REAL AND TOTAL SALVATION

The inspired Bible was given to us, as the Apostle Paul said, "to make . . . wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus . . . that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work" (II Tim. 3:15, 17). It is as the Apostle Peter expressed it, to convey to us "all things that pertain to life and godliness" (II Peter 1:3f.) including escape from the world's corruption and becoming nothing less than "partakers of the divine nature." These are the "precious and exceeding great promises" which are to make the Christian and the church incomparably wealthy.

The Biblical "Pattern" of the Catechism

Paul must "preach unto the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ" and these "make all men see . . . the dispensation" of it (Eph. 3:8, 9). Every "scribe" who has been instructed in these things, the Lord said, "is like unto a man that is a householder who bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old" (Matt. 13:52). The Church has been given the duty to preserve and convey to others riches and has been promised the continuing presence and help of the same Holy Spirit of truth who inspired the Scriptures in doing this (John 14:16, 17). It is from this point of view that we need to understand and appreciate the Church's continuing effort to preserve and formulate, defend, preach and teach its Biblical doctrines (or "teachings") throughout the centuries and to all the world. Those doctrines, as taught and formulated in the Church creeds, show their historical conditioning, and need to be checked and sometimes corrected by comparison with the Bible, but they also show the Biblical riches they under the guidance of God's Spirit convey.

Our old Heidelberg Catechism does that remarkably effectively. Following the "pattern of sound (or 'healthful' — the Greek word from which our 'hygiene' comes) words" they found especially in the Apostle Paul's great Roman letter, the Reformed fathers set

about trying to teach a sadly confused people the gospel. Like Paul they began by showing in stark biblical expressions the extent of our sin and misery which make deliverance urgent, went on to show in greater detail the manner and extent of the Lord's deliverance, and finally, taught how the delivered are to live their thanksgiving to God. That instruction book, which did its work so well that the Reformed churches adopted it as also their official creed, became the tool for systematically teaching and preaching the Biblical faith in the Reformed Churches for the next four centuries.

Lately, however, as our churches' attitude toward the Bible becomes increasingly ambiguous, appreciation for this legacy as maintained and taught in this Catechism is also giving way to neglect and even occasional contempt. Although the Church Order states "The Heidelberg Catechism and its Compendium shall be the basis of instruction" (Art. 64c), this method has been "consciously abandoned" with the adoption of the "United Church School Curriculum" in which this Catechism teaching was reduced to two years (*Acts 1973*, p. 232). The new material provided showed more of a disposition to engage in a variety of educational experiments than to systematically teach the truths of the faith. The 1977 Synod adopted a new "Young Adult Curriculum" outlining and listing a vast variety of subjects and problems (8 pages of outline) for discussion study in young people's classes. There is an unconscious irony about that. As the Christian and Church get away from trying to pattern their lives and thoughts according to God's Word (II Tim. 1:13, 14) their problems may be expected to multiply and become more frustrating. A little survey of the 700- to 800-page *Acts* of our recent Synods will nicely demonstrate to anyone both the multiplication of problems and the churches' inability to decide what to do about them. One doesn't have to look far to observe many individual examples of this phenomenon of the neglect of biblical doctrine multiplying people's problems.

a. "Sin"

The Bible and the Catechism, seeking to faithfully follow it, stress the doctrine of *sin*, its moral character, its inexcusability, its origin, extent and consequences. That blunt diagnosis is needed to shock reluctant people into realizing how serious the situation is and that something drastic must be done about it. Such an introduction to the faith is irritating and contrary to the temper of our time. It is unpsychological, poor salesmanship, we are told, and so we are being urged to modify or evade it. Our newer liturgical forms consistently tend to soften or minimize references to sin. The 1977 "Statement of Mission Principles" (*Acts*, p. 622) proposed by a study committee to our synod suggested that we approach people as "honorable, redeemable creatures of God." Have you ever heard of a more remarkable euphemism for a sinner who needs saving? Is a doctor likely to persuade a cancer patient to undergo surgery if he'll tell him that he is a "potentially very healthy man"? Seeing this min-

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imizing of sin may help us to understand why there is little sense of urgency about church services, and church education and why the results of our evangelism are often dismal.

b. "Deliverance"

The Bible and Catechism stress in detail and at length the way of salvation concentrating especially on the Person and Word of Christ. We are being told that such "scholastic" doctrines are both uninteresting and useless to people today who will respond much better to psychological and social remedies for what they "feel" are their problems or "hurts." But if we insist on "knocking" the remedy which God's gospel offers for man's real need, sin, how can we expect our "ministry" of the gospel to be effective?

c. "Gratitude"

The subject of thankful Christian living to which Bible and Catechism bring us also gets short-circuited in this present development. Obscuring the seriousness of sin and casting doubts on or minimizing the Bible teachings of salvation can hardly move anyone to grateful Christian living. Jesus' laconic remark in the Pharisee's house sums up the situation: "To whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little" (Luke 7:47). Not only has the *motive* for Christian living virtually disappeared, but its *guide* is also gone. The Bible and Catechism identify that guide as the revealed law of God which exposes both what has gone wrong and the direction in which it is to be corrected. But the notion of such a law is declared totally unacceptable in our time. Twentieth century people are never going to accept that kind of authoritarianism, least of all if it tries to tell us what we may or may not do. And so we have to forget that law and try to modify the gospel, and the Church's and Christian's way of life so as to eliminate it. Only so, we are told, may we hope to "win" and keep people for the faith today. The trouble is that the Bible says that man's real predicament is the result of his revolt against God and His law — his "declaration of independence" from God. To talk of a salvation — a "Christianity" which permits him to retain that independence, is a fraud. John stated that bluntly: "He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him" (I John 2:4).

The Role of the Canons of Dort

Relatively early in the history of the Reformed churches, church leaders appeared who resented this biblical emphasis upon the sovereignty of God and wanted to put greater emphasis upon the importance of man and his decision. The churches' eventual reaction against this trend after a long controversy, produced the Canons of Dort. The "5 points" of those Canons were not some doctrinal minutiae which could be shelved after the controversy was past and popular interest in the church had shifted to other matters. Every one of them deals with the question of how badly man needs saving and how extensive the salvation is. The Canon's concern is the same as that of the Catechism. Some especially important

points of the Bible's teaching needed to be stated more precisely against the errors that were attacking them. The sovereignty of God, the depth and seriousness of man's sin and the extent of God's saving grace needed to be stressed to keep the churches' gospel from being impoverished and weakened by these errors. These teachings of the Canons have been widely neglected in our churches and today they are under frontal attack. Perhaps more significant than the misrepresentations and unsubstantial arguments of Dr. Boer's gravamen against that Creed, was what our 1977 Synod did with it. Although every delegate at that synod had signed a promise to maintain the doctrines of this creed and to "exert" himself to keep "the Church free from . . . errors" which attack those doctrines, the Synod decided to publish this attack on the creed throughout the churches for general discussion during the next three years without so much as giving a hint of reprimand for the irresponsible and disorderly attack. If the Church officially demonstrates such indifference to the confessed faith which it is supposed to treasure, should anyone be surprised when many both in and outside of the Church become indifferent to what it says and does? Such indifference to gospel riches cannot help members to appreciate it or non-Christians to desire it.

A "World-and-Life" or Comprehensive, "Kingdom" Salvation

The Canons of Dort expressing the "5 points of Calvinism" were never intended to inventory the whole wealth of the gospel heritage. They had to deal with certain specific although central truths which were under attack and to delineate the boundaries that separated them from the Arminian errors. One who has taken notice of the boundaries of the State of Michigan has not thereby become acquainted with the whole State. The gospel, as we here observed, conveys to us "all things that pertain to life and godliness" (II Peter 1:3), was given to make "the man of God . . . complete, furnished completely unto every good work" (II Tim. 3:17), reveals "the whole counsel of God," including everything "profitable" (Acts 20:27, 28). Something of this wealth of implications of the gospel was especially appreciated by the Reformed-genius, Abraham Kuyper as he spoke of a Christian "world and life view." The Reformation movement surrounding him reached out into such areas of society as education and government seeking to capture it all "for the King." This gospel wealth has often been far too little appreciated by evangelical Christians. Everyone of them is under the gospel injunction, "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (I Cor. 10:31). The remarkable development of the movement around Kuyper in many areas of society was a result of a return to the Bible and its teaching after the Church had long been impoverished by Liberal apostasy from it. No one was more aware of the complete dependence of these Christian educational, social and cultural efforts on Christ and His gospel than Abraham Kuyper. He warned his followers that without their

"abiding in Christ and His Word" (John 15:4, 5, 7) all of their efforts would quickly wither.

Today there is considerable talk and effort in some places about recovering this "world and life view," this "kingdom vision." Our churches are showing interest in a variety of social and political problems. That might appear to be a welcome development, an indication that we are recovering something of the lost gospel "treasure." What considerably dampens ones enthusiasm for many of these efforts, however, is that the leadership in them at the same time often tends to devalue the Bible and its teachings. The result is that the social, political, and cultural efforts, often promoted with enthusiasm, but deprived of Biblical direction, soon turns out to be just a pale imitation of what the cultural humanists around us are saying and doing. Jesus said, "If . . . the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is the darkness" (Matt. 6:23).

Concluding Remarks

I have tried to outline, in a necessarily sketchy way, something of the gospel riches and our contrasting church poverty. There are indications that many throughout our churches are becoming aware of church conditions. Many older people are concerned and distressed about them. Many more are perhaps uneasy but don't want to make the efforts needed for correction. Younger people such as you, are facing the situation and will have to face it much longer than we who are older. The gospel is and conveys infinite riches. There is no reason why the Church and Christians have to be poor, weak, confused, frustrated, defeated. The Lord has often given revival and reformation as people were moved to return to Him and His Word for it. He said to a "lukewarm," poor church, "I counsel thee to buy of me gold . . . that thou mayest become rich" (Rev. 3:18). And His concerned Apostle wrote, "I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you" (I John 2:14).

Some Suggested References on the Bible as Word of God

- J. I. Packer, *God Speaks to Man—Revelation and the Bible*. Excellent. *Fundamentalism and the Word of God*.
Gerhard Maier, *The End of the Historical Critical Method*, a new little book, an excellent survey of the results of 200 years of Historical Criticism.
- B. B. Warfield, *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible*. One of the best. *Calvin and Augustine*, the essay on "Calvin's Doctrine of the Knowledge of God" is very helpful in showing Calvin's view, and the essay in the Appendix on "John Calvin the Theologian" is also especially good on this subject.
Selected Shorter Writings, Vol. II, Part V, pp. 537-636, beginning with an essay on "The Authority and Inspiration of the Scriptures" contains very valuable material taking up such subjects as "The Divine and Human in the Bible," "The Westminster Doctrine . . .," "the Autographs," etc.
- A. Skevington Wood, *Captive to the Word*, a biographical study of Luther's view, interesting, well-written and a bargain (hardcover, 90¢ at Eerdman's plant bookstore!)
- E. F. Klug, *From Luther to Chemnitz—On Scripture and the Word*, much material parallels and confirms Wood's observations.
- Kurt E. Marquart, *Anatomy of an Explosion—Missouri in Lutheran Perspective*, an excellent treatment of the Missouri Synod controversy over this matter, published by Con-

cordia Theological Seminary Press, Ft. Wayne, IN, 1977, and available from them for \$1.00—another unbeatable bargain.

- C. Van Til, *The New Synthesis Theology of the Netherlands, The New Hermeneutic, The Doctrine of Scripture*. Helpful booklets in the evaluation of the critical views, especially as they are taking over Reformed churches.
- Harold Lindsell, *The Battle for the Bible*, an excellent survey of what is happening in traditionally evangelical churches and institutions as the Liberal, critical views move in.
- E. J. Young, *Thy Word Is Truth*, excellent material, published in 1957.
- A. D. R. Polman, *The Word of God According to St. Augustine*, especially helpful in demolishing the claim that our "modern" problems are only the results of new discoveries.
- The Word of God and the Reformed Faith*, especially the essays of Ockenga, L. Berkhof and Allis are helpful.
- Stonehouse and Woolley, *The Infallible Word*, useful essays by the faculty of Westminster Seminary on the Bible's infallibility. 1958.
- S. Kistemaker, *Interpreting God's Word Today*, essays by Van Groningen, Woudstra, Kistemaker, De Young, Arntzen, Praamsma, and Morton H. Smith on this subject.
- D. Martin Lloyd-Jones, *Authority*, includes an essay on "The Authority of the Scriptures."
- G.S. Lewis, *Christian Reflections*. The essay on "Modern Theology and Biblical Criticism," makes the observation that if literary critics use their methods in analyzing the Bible as they do in analyzing his writings, his experience suggests that they will be 100% wrong (pp. 159-160).
- John Murray, *Calvin on Scripture and Divine Sovereignty*. The first essay on "Calvin's Doctrine of Scripture" is reprinted in the October and November 1977 OUTLOOKS.
(The article by Ronald Nash on "Truth by Any Other Name" in the October 7, 1977 *Christianity Today*, may be especially helpful in dealing with the Barthian influence today.)

THE WATERSHED OF THE EVANGELICAL WORLD

DR. FRANCIS A. SCHAEFFER

Francis A. Schaeffer in 1974 told the International Congress on World Evangelism in Switzerland and in 1976 told a Convention in Washington D.C. that, "Holding to a strong view of Scripture or not holding to it is the watershed of the evangelical world." He pointed out that the view one holds at this point determines whether the course he is taking is one of faithfulness to the Lord and His gospel or one of joining the prevailing liberating apostasy from Him. Because the developments in our churches increasingly show that Schaeffer was right in that observation, THE OUTLOOK is reprinting his by now famous "Watershed" speech.

There are two reasons in our day for holding a strong, uncompromising view of Scripture. First, and

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foremost, this is the only way to be faithful to what the Bible teaches about itself and what Christ teaches about Scripture. This should be reason enough in itself. But today there is a second reason why we should hold a strong uncompromising view of Scripture. There are hard days ahead of us — for ourselves and for our spiritual and our physical children. And without a strong view of Scripture as a foundation, we will not be ready for the hard days to come.

Christianity is no longer providing the consensus for our society. And Christianity is no longer providing the consensus upon which our law is based. We are in a time when humanism is coming to its natural conclusions in morals, in values, and in law. All that society has today are relative values based upon statistical averages.

The Reformation with its emphasis upon the Bible, in all that it teaches, as being the revelation of God, provided a freedom in society and yet a form in society as well. Thus, there were freedoms in the reformation countries (such as the world had never known before) without those freedoms leading to chaos — because both laws and morals had a consensus surrounding them resting upon what the Bible taught. That situation is now finished, and we cannot understand society today for ourselves, our spiritual and physical children, unless we understand in reality what has happened. In retrospect we can see that ever since the late 1930's in the United States, the Christian consensus has been a minority view and no longer provides a consensus for society in morals or law. We who are Bible-believing Christians no longer represent the status quo of our society.

The primary emphasis of biblical Christianity is the teaching that an individual can come openly to the holy God upon the basis of the finished work of Christ and that alone. Nothing *needs* to be added to Christ's finished work and nothing *can* be added to Christ's finished work. But at the same time where Christianity provides the consensus, as it did in the reformation countries (and did in the United States up to a relatively few years ago), Christianity also brings with it many secondary blessings. One of these has been titanic freedoms, yet without those freedoms leading to chaos, because the Bible's *absolutes* provide a consensus within which freedom can operate. But once the Christian consensus has been removed, as it has been today, then the very freedoms which have come out of the Reformation become a destructive force leading to chaos in society. This is the explanation of the destructive sixties. By the sixties, our society had moved to the conclusion which resulted from giving up the Christian consensus.

In the 1970's most of the young and the old alike have only two poor values — personal peace and affluence. Personal peace, as I am using it here, is not peace in one's heart. It is rather to live undisturbed by the troubles of others across the city or across the world. Personal peace is to live my own life

form — middle class or hippie it does not matter — undisturbed, regardless of the cost to my own children and to my own grandchildren. Affluence is an always expanding area of things, things, things, and more things. Success is having always more possessions. And these two poor values now dominate both the young and the old in our culture.

It wasn't true in the sixties. The youngsters really hoped for something better and they saw clearly that society was held in the grip of personal peace and affluence, but their solutions were wrong. They have now gone in a great circle and have given up hope. They are caught in the grip of apathy. And most of them now also have only the poor values of personal peace and affluence. This is the situation of our society today both at home and abroad. And there are signs that some form of authoritarian elite will fill the void and force on society a form based on arbitrary absolutes. In such a setting, we who are Bible-believing Christians, or our children, face hard days ahead. Soft days for evangelical Christians are past and only a strong view of Scripture is sufficient to withstand the pressure of an all pervasive culture built upon relativism and relativistic thinking. We must remember that it was a strong view of the absolutes which the infinite-personal God had given in the Old Testament, the revelation in Christ, and the then growing New Testament, which enabled the early church to withstand the pressure of the Roman Empire.

But evangelicalism today, although growing in numbers as far as the name is concerned, throughout the world and the United States, is not unitedly standing for a strong view of Scripture. It is for this reason that I spoke concerning the matter at the International Congress on World Evangelization held in Lausanne, Switzerland in July 1974. Here is a portion of that address:

We must say if evangelicals are to be evangelicals, we must not compromise our view of Scripture. There is no use of evangelicalism seeming to get larger and larger, if at the same time appreciable parts of evangelicalism are getting soft at that which is the central core, namely the Scriptures.

We must say with sadness that in some places, seminaries, institutions and individuals who are known as evangelicals no longer hold to a full view of Scripture. This issue is clear. Is the Bible true truth and infallible wherever it speaks, including where it touches history and the cosmos, or is it only in some sense revelational where it touches religious subjects? That is the issue.

The heart of neo-orthodox existential theology is that the Bible gives us a quarry out of which to have religious experience, but that the Bible contains mistakes where it touches that which is verifiable — namely history and science. But unhappily we must say that in some circles this concept now has come into some of that which is called evangelicalism. In short, in these circles,

the neo-orthodox existential theology is being taught under the name of evangelicalism.

The issue is whether the Bible gives propositional truth (that is, truth which may be stated in propositions) where it touches history and the cosmos, and this all the way back to pre-Abrahamic history, all the way back to the first eleven chapters of Genesis, or whether instead of that it is only meaningful where it touches that which is considered religious. T. H. Huxley, the biologist, the friend of Darwin, the grandfather of Aldous and Julian Huxley, wrote in 1890 that he visualized the day not far hence in which faith would be separated from all fact, and especially all pre-Abrahamic history, and that faith would then go on triumphant forever. This is an amazing quote for 1890, before the birth of existential philosophy or existential theology. He indeed foresaw something clearly. I am sure that he and his friends considered this some kind of a joke, because they would have understood well that if faith is separated from fact and specifically pre-Abrahamic space-time history, it is only another form of what we today call a trip.

But unhappily, it is not only the avowedly neo-orthodox existential theologians who now hold that which T. H. Huxley foresaw, but some who call themselves evangelicals as well. This may come from the theological side in saying that not all the Bible is revelational, or it may come from the scientific side in saying that the Bible teaches little or nothing when it speaks of the cosmos.

Martin Luther said: "If I profess with the loudest voice and clearest exposition every portion of the truth of God except precisely that little point which the world and the devil are at the moment attacking, I am not confessing Christ, however boldly I may be professing Christ. Where the battle rages there the loyalty of the soldier is proved and to be steady on all the battle front besides, is mere flight and disgrace if he flinches at that point.

In our day that point is the question of Scripture. Holding to a strong view of Scripture or not holding to it is the watershed of the evangelical world.

The first direction in which we must face is to say most lovingly but clearly: Evangelicalism is not consistently evangelical unless there is a line drawn between those who take a full view of Scripture and those who do not.

The *existential* methodology has infiltrated that which is called evangelicalism. The existential methodology dominates philosophy, art, music, and general culture such as the novel, poetry and the cinema. It is also the current dominant form of *liberal theology*. What is this? This position is that in the area of reason, the Bible has many mistakes in it. In the area of history and where the Bible touches the cosmos — that is, those places where the Bible touches that which is of interest to science — the Bible has many mistakes. But nevertheless, we can hope for some sort of religious experience in a sort of upper story in spite of the fact that the Bible contains mistakes. That is the present dominant form of *liberal theology*.

But unhappily this form of theology is now functioning in many places under the name of evangelicalism. It began a few years ago like this in certain evangelical circles: Where the Bible touches history and the cosmos there are mistakes. But, nevertheless, it was stressed, we can still continue to hold on to the meaning system, the value system and the religious things which the Bible teaches. Here are two quotations from men widely separated geographically across the world to show what I mean by the acceptance of the fact that in the area where the reason operates the Bible contains mistakes. These are men in evangelical circles.

But there are some today who regard the Bible's plenary and verbal inspiration as insuring its inerrancy not only in its declared intention to recount and interpret God's mighty redemptive acts, but also in any and in all of its incidental statements or aspects of statements that have to do with such non-revelational matters as geology, meteorology, cosmology, botany, astronomy, geography, etc.

In other words the Bible is divided into halves. To someone like myself this is all very familiar — in the writings of Jean Paul Sartre, of Albert Camus, of Martin Heidegger, of Karl Jaspers and in the case of thousands of modern people who have accepted the existential methodology. This quotation is saying the same thing they would say, but specifically relating this existential methodology to the the Bible.

Another quote. This is a translation from another language and a country far off from the United States.

More problematic in my estimation is the fundamentalist extension of the principle of non-contradictory Scripture to include the historic, geographic, statistical and other biblical statements, which do not touch in every case on the questions of salvation and which belong to the human element of Scripture.

Both of these statements do the same thing. They make a dichotomy. They make a division. They say that there are mistakes in the Bible, but nevertheless we are to keep hold of the religious things. This is the way the existential methodology has come into evangelical circles.

Now look with me at what the Lausanne Covenant says about Scripture.

We affirm the divine inspiration, truthfulness and authority of both Old and New Testament Scriptures in their entirety as the only written Word of God, without error in all that it affirms, and the only infallible rule of faith and practice.

I ought to say that the little phrase "without error in all that it affirms" was not a part of my own contribution to the Lausanne Congress. I didn't know that phrase was going to be included in the Covenant until I saw it in its final printed form. But let me speak about why historically it is a proper statement, if the words are dealt with fairly. We are not saying the Bible is without error in the things it does not affirm. And one of the clearest examples, of course,

is where the Bible says, "The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God." The Bible does not teach there is no God. The Bible does not affirm that. Furthermore, we are not saying the Bible is without error in all the projections which people have made on the basis of the Bible. So that statement, as it appeared in the Lausanne Covenant, is a perfectly proper statement in itself. However, as soon as I saw it in its printed form I knew it was going to be abused. In August 1975, Dr. Billy Graham wrote me as follows: "I was thinking of writing a brief booklet on 'In all that it affirms' which I took to mean the entire Bible. Unfortunately, this statement is being made a loophole by many."

Unhappily, this statement, "in all that it affirms," has indeed been made a loophole by many. How has it been made a loophole? It has been made a loophole through the existential methodology which would say that the Bible affirms the value system and certain religious things set forth in the Bible. But on the basis of the existential methodology these men say in the back of their minds, even as they sign the Covenant: "But the Bible does not affirm without error that which it teaches in the area of history and the cosmos."

Because of the widely accepted existential methodology in certain parts of the evangelical community the old words *infallibility*, *inerrancy* and *without error* are meaningless today unless some phrase is added such as: the Bible is without error not only when it speaks of values, the meaning system and religious things, but it is also without error when it speaks of history and the cosmos. If some such phrase is not added, these words today are meaningless. "Infallibility" is used today by men who do not apply it to the whole of Scripture, but only to the meaning system, to the value system and certain religious things, leaving out any place where the Bible speaks of history and the things which would interest science.

Those weakening the Bible in the area of history and where it touches the cosmos do so by saying these things in the Bible are *culturally oriented*. That is, in places where the Bible speaks of history and the cosmos it only shows forth views held by the culture in the day in which that portion of the Bible was written. For example, when Genesis and Paul affirm, as they clearly do, that Eve came from Adam, this is said to be only borrowed from the general cultural views of the day in which these books were written. Thus not just the first eleven chapters of Genesis, but the New Testament is seen to be relative instead of absolute.

But let us realize that one cannot begin such a process without going still further. These things have gone further among some who still call themselves evangelicals. They have been still trying to hold on to the value system, the meaning system and the religious things given in the Bible, but for them the Bible is only culturally oriented where it speaks of

history and the cosmos. Now in the last couple of years an extension has come to this. Now, certain moral absolutes in the area of personal relationships given in the Bible are *also* said to be culturally oriented. I will give you two examples. There could be others.

First, easy divorce and remarriage. What the Bible clearly teaches about the limitations placed upon divorce and remarriage is now put by some evangelicals in the area of cultural orientation. They say these were just the ideas of that moment when the New Testament was written. What the Bible teaches on these matters is to them only one more culturally oriented thing and that is all. There are members, elders and ministers in churches known as evangelical who no longer feel bound by what the Scripture affirms concerning this matter. They say that what the Bible teaches in this area is culturally oriented and is not to be taken as an absolute.

The same is true in the area of the clear biblical teaching regarding order in the home and the church. The moral commands in regard to this order are now also considered culturally oriented by some speakers and writers under the name of evangelical.

In other words, in the last five or six years the situation has moved from hanging on to the value system, the meaning system and the religious things while saying that what the Bible affirms in regard to history and the cosmos is culturally oriented to the further step of still trying to hold on to the value system, the meaning system and religious things, but now lumping these moral commands along with the things of history and the cosmos as culturally oriented. There is no end to this. The Bible is made to say only that which echos the surrounding culture at *our* moment of history. The Bible is bent to the culture instead of the Bible judging our society and culture.

Once men and women begin to go down the path of the existential methodology under the name of evangelicalism, the Bible is no longer the Word of God without error — each part may be eaten away step by step. When men and women come to this place, what then has the Bible become? It has become what the Liberal Theologians said it was back in the days of the twenties and the thirties. Do you remember Howard and Trumbull of the old *Sunday School Times*? They were men of God weeping their hearts out in issue after issue of the *Sunday School Times*, pointing out that the Bible was constantly being devalued. We are back in the days of Howard and Trumbull, as well as scholars like J. Gresham Machen who pointed out that the foundation upon which Christianity rests was being destroyed. What is that foundation? It is that the infinite-personal God who exists has not been silent, but has spoken propositional truth in *all* that the Bible teaches — including what it teaches concerning history, concerning the

cosmos and in moral absolutes as well as what it teaches concerning religious subjects.

What is the use of evangelicalism seeming to get larger and larger if significant numbers of those under the name of evangelical no longer hold to that which makes evangelicalism evangelical? If this continues, we are not faithful to what the Bible claims for itself and we are not faithful to what Jesus Christ claims for the Scriptures. But also—let us never forget—if this continues we and our children will not be ready for the difficult days ahead.

Furthermore, if we acquiesce we will no longer be the redeeming salt for our culture—a culture which is committed to the concept that both morals and laws are only a matter of cultural orientation, of statistical averages. That is the hallmark—the mark of our age. And if we are marked with the same mark, how can we be the redeeming salt to this broken, fragmented generation in which we live?

I would like to state again the last line which dealt with the Scripture in my Lausanne speech: “The first direction in which we must face is to say most lovingly but clearly: Evangelicalism is not consistently evangelical unless there is a line drawn between those who take a full view of Scripture and those who do not.” A line must be drawn if evangelicals in this country and other countries throughout the world are to be ready for the strenuous days ahead. Those, who under God’s hand have the leadership of evangelicalism, must have the courage to draw a line, and do it publicly, between those who take a full view of Scripture and those who have accepted the existential methodology. If we don’t, we have cut the ground from under the feet of our children and we have destroyed any hope of being redeeming salt to the surrounding relativistic culture.

You cannot wait for others to draw the line. You must draw the line. Will it be with tears? I hope it will be with tears. I remember as a young man in the 1930’s when harshness and unlove reigned, but harshness and unlove do not need to reign when the line is drawn. It *can* be with tears and it *can* be with love. But unless those who have the responsibility of leadership are willing to draw the line, they cut the ground from under the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We who bear the name evangelical need to be unitedly those who have the same view of Scripture as William Cowper had when he wrote the hymn, *The Spirit Breathes Upon the Word*. In contrast to any concept of the Bible being borrowed through cultural orientation, the 2nd verse of that hymn reads:

*A glory gilds the sacred page,
Majestic, like the sun:
It gives a light to every age;
It gives, but borrows none.*

reformed women speak

As this issue of THE OUTLOOK goes to press we have been shocked by the sudden death of Miss Johanna Timmer, our departmental editor. Miss Timmer has over many years shown herself ready to labor and, where necessary, to fight for the Reformed Faith. We shall miss her staunch support and faithful labors in the Reformed Fellowship and the pages of its magazine, as we thank God for the way He has long guided and used her service in His Kingdom cause. A sketch of her life is to appear elsewhere in the paper. Miss Timmer wrote of this article for her department, “I place this article on housecleaning because I believe Mrs. Folkerts (Des Plaines, Ill.) is reflecting the sentiment of a goodly number in the church whose opinions should not be ignored.”

housecleaning

MRS. JOSEPH FOLKERTS

When I start housecleaning in the spring, all the drawers and closets are cleaned and clothes and knick-knacks which are old, unwisely purchased, and/or are no longer useful are discarded. Some old “treasures” become more treasured as the years go by.

Is it possible our church is in for a very serious housecleaning? If so, let’s start at the top. Pastors who no longer believe the whole truth of God’s Word are the first thing that must go!

What about our new marriage, baptism and profession of faith forms? In letting them replace the old ones are we throwing away treasures and replacing them with cheap knick-knacks?

Have you seen a group of Christians dancing lately? I have. Art? Garbage! Satan laughs and our Lord must be grieving. Of course, we have music to dance by. Many new hymns are almost sensual; cheap sensationalism. Take away the words, and the music fits perfectly for dancing and in nightclubs. More garbage for the trash heap.

Never before have movies on TV been so saturated with sex and evil of every sort—with the actors’ and actresses’ real lives running a close second to the films. However, we are now sophisticated enough to handle this. What folly!

There are also the dangers of the new evangelism creeping into our churches. And there are as many versions of the Bible as there are women at the society meetings. Do we need these?

And what about easy divorce—and lodge membership gaining acceptance? More garbage!

Am I through house cleaning? I tried, but being

human, I'm sure that I threw away some things that might have been kept and saved some things that should have been thrown away. However, what if we never cleaned house? Confusion would reign, and we would have no real desire to live in our home.

Are some of us beginning to feel uncomfortable in our church home? Let us pray and work for a thorough housecleaning. Let us hear again, loud and clear, "Thus saith the Lord!" And let us pray that the Holy Spirit may enlighten our minds and hearts that we may desire to know and do the perfect will of God.

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:

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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.

A Canadian reader would like to know whether we should use the word "consistory" or "council" when referring to the local governmental body of the congregation in the Christian Reformed Church.

I'm not sure whether there is a definite right or wrong answer to that question. Historically and traditionally there have been differences of opinion relative to this question, and there remains a difference in practice among our churches as well.

In checking a dictionary of theology that I have in my library, I discovered that "the consistory was formerly the antechamber of the imperial palace. Here the emperor sat on a tribunal to dispense justice, with others standing around him (consistentes)." Later the article indicates, this term was taken over by the church to refer more specifically to the administration of ecclesiastical law.

The word "council" refers to an assembly, being derived from the Latin "consilium," meaning a collection of people for the purpose of deliberation, consultation, or decision. It is used as the translation of

the New Testament word "synedrian" which literally means "seated together." The assembly of the apostles in Jerusalem, recorded in Acts 15, is sometimes referred to as the first Christian council.

Article 35 of the Church Order of the Christian Reformed Church uses the word "consistory" to refer to the meeting of all the office-bearers. But it goes on to say that in churches where the number of elders is at least four, a distinction may be made between the general consistory, to which all the office-bearers belong, and the restricted consistory, in which the deacons do not participate. During recent years, the term "consistory" in many churches has come to be applied to the meeting of the ministers and elders, and the term "council" has been applied to the general consistory, the meeting of ministers, elders and deacons. That may have been as much out of a practical consideration as anything else. Rather than announce a meeting of "general consistory" and "restricted consistory," which may tend to be very confusing, they simply announce a "council" meeting and a "consistory" meeting.

There is, of course, another question involved in all this, and that pertains to the respective functions of the elders and deacons. When the present Church Order was undergoing revision in the early 1960s, there was a one man minority report presented to Synod pleading for the retention of Article 37 which described the consistory as consisting of ministers and elders. Synod chose not to adopt that recommendation, but accepted the present Article 35. Yet the distinction between the general consistory and restricted consistory, delineating certain distinctions in the functions of the offices, was retained. The result is that in many of our larger churches at least, the meeting of the minister and elders is referred to as the consistory meeting, and the meeting of all the office-bearers is referred to as the council meeting. But there is no uniform practice among us.

It has been argued that the word "council" is not desirable, because that word has come to be attached to civic bodies of government, such as the city council. But that can hardly be a valid reason for rejecting it. If the word accurately describes what we do in such a meeting, namely, bring together certain people for deliberation, consultation and decision, then we ought not to be afraid to use it. It may even be more descriptive than the word "consistory," for if my information is correct, that word is derived from the Latin word "consistorium" which merely designates a place of meeting.

Though the term by which we designate the governing body of the church is not unimportant, it is even more important that we be faithful to Scripture when defining the duties of the office-bearers who attend these meetings. Let us always seek to be guided by Scripture when defining the duties of the office-bearers who attend these meetings. Let us always seek to be guided by Scripture when it comes to doing the work of the church through the office-bearers, and faithfully perform the functions of the offices to whom we have been called. ●

the Holy Bible and Confession

DR. ROBERT K. RUDOLPH

Dr. Robert K. Rudolph is since 1932 Professor of Theology in the Reformed Episcopal Seminary in Philadelphia. The Reformed Episcopal Church has existed since 1873 when it broke away from the Protestant Episcopal Church because that denomination was persistently moving back into Roman Catholic errors of doctrine. Today the denomination numbers over eight thousand members about evenly divided between white and black who belong to about forty parishes in two northern synods and thirty parishes in one southern synod.

The seminary has 84 students from some 26 denominations or independent churches who are studying under 4 full-time and 3 part-time professors, all Reformed and Calvinists in doctrine, using the theological writings of Berkhof and Hodge. We want to become acquainted with these Christian brothers who from a somewhat different tradition share our common Reformed Faith as taught in God's inspired Word.

Beginning with the communist concept that no one has any right to privacy of notion or opinion; that commissars should watch over the movements of every citizen; that it is the duty of every citizen to spy upon the other and that it is the duty of every citizen to confess any wrong thoughts he may have had, and then continuing with the present popularity of "sensitivity training" for government employees which is being used all too widely, and to group therapy among Christians; the need for a clear grasp of what God has indicated about confession in the Bible must be apparent.

One of the factors which came into the Church during the dark ages when the Church sought to control the lives of its members and to direct them, not by the proclamation of God's truth, but, rather, by exercising direct control over them, was the confessional booth with its indication that man had the power to forgive sin — a thing always denied by the Bible — and to prescribe penance thereunto. The way in which wicked priests took advantage of those whose weakness they thus knew became the theme of many stories, and the basis of objection to the whole notion of confession during the Reformation. Only recently have the ritualistic High Churchmen in the Church of England and the Protestant Episcopal Church, reintroduced this heinous practice.

But among protestants generally there is now a

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new wave of popularity for confession in the name of psychological health and well-being. This follows the outbreak of confession practiced by the Buckmanites in the thirties and forties except that by them it was to be a means of contact with lost individuals. So specific did those confessions of particular sins become that this practice was banned from a number of secular campuses due to their salacious nature. But now we are being told that James 5:16 where we are directed to confess our sins one to another directs a return to this sinful way. As the late Dr. Machen pointed out to the writer, that passage does not demand that we confess specific and lurid sins but simply that we confess when we are guilty of some offense to the person whom we have hurt. That it cannot be thought to mean such a practice is evident, he said, from Ephesians 5:12, "For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret." Both the late Bishop Rudolph and Dr. Machen warned the writer that we are to "forget those things which are behind" (Phil. 3:13), and they noted emphatically that dwelling upon sin and thinking about it tends to increase it wherefore God has indicated that we should think on: "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report" (Phil. 4:8).

Doubtless one reason why there is a felt need in this area comes out of the fact that there has been a break-down of discipline. People have not been brought to face their wicked deeds by due process of accusation and proof because too many people have been influenced by Freud's notion that one should do anything that comes naturally and not be repressed. Talking about sin just as seeing sin in the theater or reading about it in the paper-back will, certainly, increase its prevalence.

Confession should be to Christ and to Him in secret, pointed out my good perceptors. He is an omniscient Confessor from whom the secrets of NO heart is hid! He is also a confessor with full power to forgive sin, a power which He purchased for us on the cross — what a sure respite from the load of sin this provides! And He too can give us His Holy Spirit so that we may be strengthened not to repeat our offenses. The agency of the true Christian psychiatrist or other counsellor is to describe sins in general Biblical terms and to admonish that if it be present, it is to Christ, alone, that one should bear his soul. To confess to a man or a group of men is to put man in God's place! Truly Christian counsellors know how susceptible they are themselves to sin and will not allow themselves to be tempted by knowing some weakness which has been confessed by another.

Too much modern counselling argues that *all* are deeply scarred by maladjustment; they fail to note that the difference between normalcy and abnormality is as clear in psychology as it is in medicine. Only a small proportion of the population is sick at any one time — not half, or three-quarters — or all! *The Readers' Digest* (p. 78, Jan. 69) quotes Mark Twain:

"Confession is good for the soul and bad for the reputation." That issue points out that "totalitarian states place great emphasis on the proposition that their citizens keep no secrets, that they confess all. In this way the state dehumanizes its people."

Then, too, there is a tendency in group therapy that one patient will learn from the waywardness of others how to be worse. No psychologist, if he be Christian, has any right to demand any confession except to Christ Jesus, the Lord, neither should he invite it or welcome it—the more particularly in mixed groups—but even in groups of the same sex there is the danger from such practices of the growth and increase of homosexuality. The more sin is made familiar and talked about, the cheaper it becomes to the wicked human heart. Let us in Christ's dear Name, the rather, think upon truth and those things which are of good report!

christian wretchedness

PAUL DE KOEKKOEK

In his Epistle to the Romans, the Apostle Paul made an in-depth study of man's relation to God and His law. Not by his own righteousness can man meet God's demands. It is only by the God-given righteousness of faith that a confrontation with God is safe for man. He is saved, renewed, through Christ, by grace. As such, he can have a delight in the law of God after the inward man (Rom. 7:22).

However, Paul makes clear also that this does not mean present unmixed happiness for the Christian now. He testifies to a different, a foreign element in his members (Rom. 7:22, 23), and its presence and workings lead Paul to admit and lament his wretchedness (Rom. 7:24). But, thanks to God, Paul could also point to the great Deliverer from that wretchedness: Jesus Christ our Lord (Rom. 7:24, 25).

There are telling instances of such wretchedness recorded in Scripture. Jacob-Israel deceived Isaac, his father, to receive his blessing. Godly King David committed adultery and murder. Peter (leading disciple) denied his Lord. Some of us may know of shocking sins of contemporary outstanding Christians. Possibly our own lives, private or public, include such evil doing. How wretched God's people can be as they regret such misdeeds, and even when there have been no such subtle offenses each Christian conscience must deplore his many less obvious sins.

Yes, *Christians!* Paul by his outspoken distress, showed that he was a child of God. The unrepentant sinner does not understand or share this Christian sense of wretchedness. Judas' guilty conscience drove

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him to suicide. The Pharisees of Paul's day and the humanists of our time, envision self-improvement, self-congratulation! But with Paul (Rom. 7:24) we sense our own peculiar wretchedness as Christians.

But notice: With Paul (Rom. 7:17) and John (I John 3:6, 9; 4:17), we know that our new life, the life of one regenerated, does not sin. The work of God in us is perfect. But we must remember that there is "another law in our members" (Rom. 7:23). There is a foreign tendency and activity, warring against the law of our (renewed) mind. That evil partner, the "old man of sin," may incite us to all kinds of sin, and that may cause distress voiced in that "O wretched man, who shall deliver me from this death?" We Christians may be puzzled and distressed by evil foolishness of fellow Christians, or some gross sin in our own lives, and ask in painful concern: "How can we, Christians, commit such evil?" We also find that although, in the present life, our "better self" may fight against sin, we cannot pull ourselves out of it.

However, thanks to God, this situation is not hopeless. There is One, whom Paul knew, who is certain to deliver the troubled child of God from his wretchedness: Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom. 7:25).

So we Christians of the latter days may know that our sin problem is not unresolved. In Christ, our Lord, there is forgiveness of all our sins, and He stops short all kinds and workings of sin in us. And He also finally removes "the body of *this* death" (which caused our wretchedness) when we die.

At our death and burial, there is ample reason to rejoice in Christ's victorious resurrection life, and ours, too! Christ makes all things new (Rev. 21:5). Then all sin is removed completely. In Him, by grace, the new life takes over completely. In Him we shall indeed be "more than conquerors" (Rom. 8).

There is a future for the sin-troubled child of God.

There is no more reason to lament about our wretchedness.

What a relief it is to know that now!

THERE IS, THEREFORE, NOW NO CONDEMNATION TO THEM THAT ARE IN CHRIST JESUS . . . (Rom. 8:1-).

We may wonder why God doesn't remove all sin at once. This is a mystery of His sovereign counsel. He seems to direct our attention to His own sovereignty in the experience of sin and redemption to teach us our utter dependence on Him. Also, to challenge our Christian faithfulness, and make us properly thankful for full redemption from sin and full participation in the life of glory.

Soli Deo Gloria! All praise to God—the God of our salvation as well as of creation!

My Savior 'neath Thy sheltering wings

My soul delights to dwell;

Still closer to Thy side I press,

For near Thee all is well.

My soul shall conquer every foe,

Upholden by Thy hand;

Thy people shall rejoice in God,

Thy saints in glory stand.

PSALM 63

"PENSIONITIS"?

an unfair accusation

JOHN VANDER PLOEG

Some months ago my editorial on "Desideratum — A United Reformed Church" called forth a measure of response including a misunderstanding which, in fairness to honestly disturbed ministers in the CRC, should be set straight.

Writing about disturbing developments in the CRC, one correspondent states: "There are still a goodly number of pastors who are very unhappy with this trend. Their answer is, 'What can be done about it?' Leaving the CRC for them would be a serious matter also in regard to their pension that would be cut off if they left the CRC — right?"

Another writes: "All the ministers over forty will never pull out, you know the reason why?" I assume that this correspondent also refers to the danger of losing one's ministerial pension upon withdrawing from the CRC — an affliction that has come to be known as "pensionitis." In other words, *money talks*, and that is supposed to be the reason why the older CRC ministers will not leave the denomination no matter how bad the situation may become.

Now, what are the facts?

Briefly, no minister's pension is in jeopardy regardless of whether he remains in the CRC or not.

To confirm my own recollection of this being the ruling and in an effort to once more get rid of this false accusation of "pensionitis" I inquired of a member of the denominational Pension Committee and received the following reply:

"I am writing in response to your letter of December 20, 1977. You are correct in your understanding regarding the pension benefits paid to the men who have served in the Christian Reformed Church. A retired minister who leaves the denomination would still receive his pension benefit and a minister who leaves the denomination before retirement, would, upon reaching retirement age, receive pension payments according to the number of years of his service in the CRC.

"These provisions were incorporated into the plan several years ago when the entire pension plan for Christian Reformed ministers was revised. Whereas there may be some people in the denomination who would feel that is inappropriate, the arrangement is linked with the vesting schedule of the plan. Under the new plan the man's retirement benefit is linked to his years of service rather than to his doctrinal standing or conduct of life at the time the retirement benefit is received. Legal requirements are such that such benefits must be given and cannot be linked to a person's being in good graces with the denomination."

So, whatever reasons an older minister may have for not leaving the denomination, "pensionitis" is not it.



MISS JOHANNA TIMMER

MISS JOHANNA TIMMER

1901 - 1978

KATIE GUNNINK

Miss Timmer was widely known in the Christian Reformed Community as an outstanding leader and teacher. She was the first dean of women at Calvin College and served as dean and teacher for fourteen years. She was the first acting president of the Reformed Bible Institute (now Reformed Bible College) as well as a much loved and admired teacher.

Those of us who knew her as a teacher were impressed with her love for God's Word and the Reformed faith. She taught with such conviction and enthusiasm that the doctrines of the Bible became alive and precious. She taught with great thoroughness, and asked of us such mastery of the truths she presented as to make them a permanent possession in our minds and hearts.

Miss Timmer was a spiritually strong woman and many Christians found in her a pillar of strength to lean upon in their own uncertainties and doubts. She had strong convictions and even those who did not always agree with her position had to admire her consistency in holding to them and living them.

To Miss Timmer God was great and adorable. She humbly acknowledged His sovereign grace in her life and attitude. That sovereign, electing grace of God was a most precious doctrine to her. It was the last subject we discussed together when she asked me to submit for publication in *THE OUTLOOK* a talk I gave at the RBC convocation exercises last fall. We then confessed to one another that our only blessedness is in the objective, gracious act of God's grace in Christ. "Nothing in my hands I bring. Simply to the cross I cling." When I was a student at Calvin she told me her favorite song at that time was "Beneath the Cross of Jesus, I feign would take my stand."

Miss Timmer is now standing before the majestic throne of God, robed in the white garment of Christ's righteousness. But she has also with all God's saints helped to fashion the bride's wedding garment, by God's grace, weaving in the fine, clean, white linen of her own righteous deeds. See Revelation 19:8.

LESSONS FROM I JOHN



REV. HENRY VANDER KAM

Lessons 13 and 14 on I John by Rev. Henry Vander Kam, pastor of the Grace Christian Reformed Church of Kalamazoo, Michigan, are in this issue.

Rev. Vander Kam presents his material briefly and clearly as those who have used his outlines in the past will well recall. Two lessons appear each month.

God's love to us

LESSON 13

I John 4:7-16

Love and Christianity have always been intimately associated not only in the eyes of the members of the church but also in the eyes of unbelievers. The church of Christ is the dispenser of love in this world. The church is the place for forgiveness and the haven for all the oppressed. Sometimes the nature of that love is misunderstood. The liberal church preaches a love which has no foundation in the Scriptures and is despised by secular thinkers. The Bible commands us to love and show us how it has been made possible.

"God is love" — John, the Apostle of love, has given us some beautiful passages about the love of God and our love one for another. This is one of them. Previously he had spoken of the difference between the children of God and the children of this world. The children of God are born of Him. Therefore they ought to love one another, that is, love the others who are also born of God. The love of which John speaks is the true love. God is the Source of true love. There are all kinds of "love" in this world. The love of which the Apostle speaks here is the same love to which he has referred in 3:16 of his gospel. If we have that kind of love we have the assurance that we are born of God. If we have that kind of love we know God, i.e., we stand in a life-relationship to Him. This is an unbroken knowledge of Him.

Those who do not love their fellowmen give evidence of the fact that they do not know God. They

do not have the first principles of that knowledge. Hereby John divides mankind — those who know God love, and those who do not know Him do not love. He, however, again argues from the result to the cause. To show that this simple argument is nevertheless a convincing one, John states "for God is love." Those who are born of Him Who is love and know Him, must love too. Contrariwise, those who do not know Him nor are born of Him, cannot love.

The statement "God is love" shows us that love belongs to His being. This is not His only attribute but it is one of them. The Scriptures reveal that God has many attributes and we are to do justice to all of them. We may not "playoff" the one attribute against the other. This becomes clear later in this same passage.

A sacrificial love — How is it now revealed that God is love? That love of God, says the Apostle, was revealed most clearly when God sent His only begotten Son into the world. It revealed that love to be *sacrificial*. He was His only begotten — He had no others. He sent all that He had! This only begotten Son was sent so that we might have life through Him. Therein is the nature of His love revealed. His love for His people knows no bounds. At the same time, His love for His justice knows no bounds. He sent the Son to die so that His people might live!

That "God is love" must, therefore, not be seen as an abstraction but as a love which does justice to His whole being and all His attributes. Everything that took place in Bethlehem, in Gethsemane, and on Golgotha has to be seen in the light of the statement: "God is love." The result of the manifestation of His love was that we might live through Him, but O the process through which this result was achieved!

To see the true nature of love the writer shows his readers that it did not have its origin in man but in God. That we loved God does not reveal the true character of love. To love God ought to be "natural" because He is altogether loveable. Man owes everything to Him. Why should he not love the God who has given his life and satisfies every need? No, this is the true love that God loved us! We who are not only dependent creatures but who were rebellious and wholly unloveable. *That* is true love — to love the unlovely!

His love not only *sent* His Son into the world but sent Him for the specific purpose of taking away the sins of His people and covering them before His face. Here, in a few words, John describes the purpose of Christ's coming. He was not sent only to teach or to be an example, but to die in the place of His people. The love of God comes to its clearest and fullest expression on Calvary. There it is revealed as nowhere else that "God is love"! Our love to Him pales in comparison.

There were those in the early church who denied that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God. John has refuted all their arguments with these words. Jesus was sent of the Father. He took our nature. He suffered and died instead of His people.

A love perfect in us — Now, if God has so loved us (and He has) then we also ought to love one another. This certainly is a natural application of that which he has just said. How could anyone remain unmoved by this manifestation of the love of God? Those we are called to love have also tasted of His love shown in their redemption. Of course, faith is not excluded, but the Apostle is not referring to that just now but would have the members of the church see the responsibility to which the love of God commits them.

No man has seen God at any time because God is a Spirit and cannot be seen by the physical eye of man. Why interject this at this particular time? Well, John can speak glowingly of the love of God but if we cannot see Him how shall we know that it is really His love which has been manifested? God has revealed Himself in His Son. But, if we love one another we come face to face with the work of God which He has performed in His people. That love which we have for each other is a sure sign that God is abiding in us because that love can come from no other source. His love is perfected in us, i.e., come to full expression because He wrought that love in our hearts and we give evidence of it in our relation to fellow believers.

A love-fellowship with God — John had spoken of God abiding in us but he now goes a step farther and not only speaks of God abiding in us but also of our abiding in Him. This creates that fellowship with God. We not only receive His revelation but a unity has been established with Him. This is the fruit of the Spirit of God.

Those who were dead (to speak in the language of Paul) have been made alive by the Spirit of God. The Spirit has applied the work of Jesus Christ. He has brought the people of God into a love-fellowship with their God. It has been His work from beginning to end. Therein is the great love of God revealed! His people have experienced Pentecost and the full assurance of salvation is given them. Though they have not seen God, the Spirit discloses the works of God to them unmistakably.

Eye-witnesses of God's love — Once more the Apostle calls the attention of God's people to the fact that he and his fellow Apostles saw those things of which he has spoken. He did this too at the beginning of this epistle (1:1). They bear witness to the things they have seen. The believers do not receive it second or third hand but from eyewitnesses. This was important to the early believers and it also gives a more vivid account to us so many years later. They bear witness that the Father sent His Son into the world. The emphasis rests upon the relationship of the Father and Son. It emphasizes the love relationship between the two.

Jesus is indeed the Son of God! The Father sent Him to be the Savior of the world. He was sent to save the organism of humanity and the whole world — animate and inanimate — would feel the effects. He

was not sent to save every individual but the people of God who form this new humanity. This fact is made clear by this same Apostle in numerous places.

A crucial confession — Now the matter of faith or confession is finally mentioned. The Apostle speaks of those who confess that Jesus is the Son of God. There were so many at that time who did not come to this confession. This confession John says, is crucial. This is the heart of every true confession. Upon this confession rests the whole structure of the faith of His people. Only those who come to this glorious confession of identifying Jesus and the Son of God have God abiding in them and they in God. In short, only these are children of God! Only these have fellowship with God. Only these have tasted of the love of God. Only these are able to love one another. Love does not stand alone — it is a product of the faith which has been given us. It is also this simple confession which gives all things needful. From this simple and basic confession flow all further confessions.

Once more the Apostle adds a personal note. We, the other Apostles, and he, as well as the other eye witnesses of His ministry, know and have believed the love which God has in us. He, who had to suffer so much for the cause of Jesus Christ, knows and believes that love. He has seen many martyred for the sake of the gospel, but he knows and believes that love. Knowing and believing that love does not depend on prosperity. That love is not obscured by losses and trials. It goes far beyond these things. Despite all the things which John has experienced he again confidently affirms that God is love! Nothing can separate him from that love. Even if God sees fit to have him banished to the rocky isle of Patmos — God is still love! Giving His Son for his redemption transcends all earthly experience. His readers must also see this and so have assurance of faith whatever the circumstances of life.

Having given his own confession John now reminds his readers of those things which he had mentioned earlier. He again speaks of God abiding in them and they abiding in God. Is this mere repetition? No, John shows them the simplicity of faith. If they abide in the love of which he has spoken they have the assurance that they are children of God. No new revelation is necessary. Something doesn't have to "happen" to them. The exhibition of true love is their guarantee, because only God gives it and He gives it only to His children.

Questions for discussion:

1. There is far more emphasis on love than on justice today? May these two ever be separated? What is true love? Is it found among unbelievers?
2. Do those know and love God who do not take

Him at His word? Must we believe all that is in the Bible to know and love Him? How serious is it when some have doubts about the first chapters of Genesis?

3. Could those who lived before Pentecost know the gospel and enjoy the assurance of faith? Explain.
4. Is it enough if we confess that Jesus is the Son of God? What is the value of our more detailed confessions?
5. Should young people wait for something to "happen" to their spiritual life before they make profession of faith?

The fruits of love

LESSON 14

I John 4:17-21

Although men speak of love a great deal they have always found it difficult to define it because it is essentially a foreign element in this world of sin. John too speaks a great deal about love and has made it clear that true love comes from God and is given to His people. That is the love wherein they have fellowship with the God Who is love. As that love of God has been revealed in His people they are to show that love one to another. But, there is more. That love which has been given to us does something within the heart of the recipient too. Only when that love has gripped the individual believer and fills his own heart and soul will he be able to demonstrate his love to others.

When the Apostle speaks of love being made perfect with us, he emphasizes the fact that that love has molded the entire person. So has the love which was given us reached its goal and achieved its purpose. That love must bear fruit. It must not only be found in the heart but must come to expression in all he does. It has to rule his whole person. The love which God gave to His people is far too powerful to be hidden. Paul often speaks of faith ruling and determining every activity so that whether we eat or drink or anything else, it will be done out of faith. That which does not proceed from faith is sin. So John now speaks of the effect of the love of God. It is to become a dominating force in life. So is it made perfect.

Boldness in day of judgment — Another benefit which the believer receives from that love of God which has been given him is that he has boldness in the day of judgment. He realizes that he will have to give an account before his God in the final day. He also knows that this judgment on his deeds is a daily occurrence. What should be his attitude toward this judgment? He is well aware of his own sin. He

also knows that the love he has received does not cover his sins. How then can he have boldness in the face of the judgment of God? Because that love is the guarantee that he is a child of God! God gives this love only to those who are in Christ Jesus. God will, therefore, also reveal Himself as the believer's Father even in the day of judgment! The one who possesses the true love will not know a paralyzing fear when he thinks of the God Who comes in judgment, but, on the contrary, he will have boldness.

That this benefit really belongs to the believer is further clarified by the fact that as He (Christ), so are we in the world. Christ is therefore our example. In Him was the love of God personified. He showed this love of God in all His actions. He had no fear of judgment for Himself. We are to be imitators of Christ. He is far more than our example, but He is also our example! In the measure we imitate the life and works of Christ, in that measure has love been made perfect in us.

No fear in love — "There is no fear in love." This is said in reference to the attitude one will have to the day of judgment, to which he had referred in the previous verse. Love draws the believer ever closer to his God. Fear is that which separates, but love unites.

John does not speak of fear here in the sense in which Scripture so often uses the term in a favorable sense, e.g., "the fear of God." That awe in which we are to stand before God is always proper and should be emphasized more today. When the Apostle here speaks of fear, he means to be afraid and disturbed. Believers will admit that they often fear. That, however, is an indication of the fact that their love has not worked through — has not been perfect. "Perfect love casteth out fear." This fear and love cannot exist side by side. True and perfect love conquers fear. Fear has punishment, or torment, as some versions translate it. Fear robs men of the joy of life. It makes it impossible for them to achieve their full potential. Fear has driven men to desperate deeds.

Institutions are filled with those who have fear of that over which they have no control. Now, the love of God given to His people and coming to full flower within them gives them this benefit that fear is overcome! Who needs to fear when he has the Judge of all the earth as his Father? What can man then do unto me? How great are the blessings which the gospel bestows on those who put their trust in it! "He that feareth is not made perfect in love." That love can banish fear. It is only a question of exercising it enough.

We reflect God's love — "We love because he first loved us." The Apostle does not mention an object of love in this verse because he is placing all emphasis upon the fact that this gift has been given us. We are able to love! Men don't love by nature. Although the world speaks much about love, it really doesn't know what love is. We love only because He loved us first. This is not the love which God may have for men

because they are His creatures, but it is the love which is bestowed on believers through the finished work of Jesus Christ. He is the Source of true love. When we love we do not do this out of ourselves, but we are simply reflecting the love of God in us. Because it finds its source in Him this love is able to accomplish so much. If it is perfected in us it will indeed drive out all fear.

How often this Apostle returns to the thought that we are to love both God and the brethren. He shows that it is totally incompatible to love God and hate the brother. This is a contradiction to him. It is, of course, an easy matter to say that we love God. Who would be able to challenge us? Who would be able to measure how great or small that love is? It is similar to the view of the Pharisees which Jesus corrected when He healed the paralytic (Mark 2). One can easily say to someone: Thy sins are forgiven. Who would be able to prove or disprove it? But, to say to a paralytic: Take up thy bed and walk, can be judged in its effectiveness by everybody.

So it is with the man who says he loves God. Who would be able to prove or disprove it? But, whether a person loves or hates his brother becomes evident to everybody. If he hates his brother, then, says, John, he is a liar if he claims to love God. True love for God will not permit a person to hate his brother. To love God means that God has first loved us and that love of God is so strong that it compels the believer to love his brother! The gospel of Christ and the works of the grace of God unmask all hypocrisy!

This teaching must not be used (as it sometimes is) to posit the view that love and hatred cannot exist side by side. They indeed exist side by side in God Himself Who is love. Not only can they exist side by side, but the intensity of the love sharpens the hatred. God hates sin. The believer, only when he has tasted of the true love of God, hates sin. He is no longer able to live in sin while the unbeliever has no problem there. But, though they can exist side by side, it makes all the difference — what is the *object*? The brother may not be the object of his hatred. The love for God demands love for those who are born of Him. Nor may the one be neutral in his relation to the other, i.e., neither love nor hatred. This is often attempted. No, it must be positive — he is to love him!

Spontaneous love for the brother — John now adds a reason why the believer must love his brethren as well as his God. It seems to be a strange reason. He speaks of it as though it is easier to love the brother whom he can see than God whom he cannot see. For some, no doubt, the reasoning could be turned around. It makes it so difficult to love the one whom we see (with all his faults). For such it is easier to love the One whom they have not seen. However, John, when speaking of the brother whom we have seen, is not referring to all his faults and frailties, but to the work of God which has been accomplished in him. The reborn brother again shows the image of God

more clearly. This we must love! God's work is manifested!

Seeing this work of God, our love ought to spring forth spontaneously. If we do not love this brother, we do not love God. For, how can we love God Whom we have not seen? And — it is certain that we have not seen Him. He is seen in Christ — and He is seen in His work in the fellow believer. But, the fact that they have not seen Him seems to make it easier for some to love Him. They have then formed a "God" of their own imagination. *That* they love! But that is not the love for God which is demanded of us! The Apostle therefore puts it in very strong language and says that if a man does not love the brother whom he has seen, he cannot love God whom he has not seen.

Obedience to God's command — He concludes this section on the fruits of love by reminding his readers once more that God has commanded this love. According to Scripture in so many places, we are commanded to love! This is not left to the feelings of a person, but it is the commandment of God. Not only are they commanded to love God, but they are likewise commanded to love the brethren. True love, of course, keeps His commandments. His commandment does not add something new or foreign. The love for God, born of God's love to us, will naturally love the brother — if that love has been perfected — if it has come to its full maturity. He will then love his brother whom he sees in all his faults and weaknesses because he himself received the love of God although he was a sinner and there was nothing in him to make him attractive.

So does the love of God play its role in the life of those who have been redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ. That love of God works miracles! Those who were alienated are brought together. The church becomes the communion of saints.

Questions for discussion:

1. How can we come to a greater "perfection" of love?
2. There are so many personal and social problems today and counselors in every field. Do you think the working through of the love of God might solve many of these problems? Is preaching of the Word also counseling?
3. Can the unbeliever really love his fellowman?
4. Why is it often easier to love the people on distant mission fields than those with whom we come in contact every day?
5. Do we emphasize the fruits of love as much as precision of statements of faith?

JESUS WEPT

John 11:35



REV. JOHN BLANKESPOOR

There is in this chapter (John 11) something secretive, something hidden, something mysterious in the words and actions of our Lord. Lazarus was not sick unto death, but he died anyway. Jesus lets His friend die. Death is called a sleeping. Lazarus is dead and yet he isn't dead.

Usually people are curious about these tears of Jesus. People are often more concerned about this curiosity being satisfied than about knowing the Gospel in this portion of John.

Very commonly these tears of Jesus are explained to mean that He is so sympathetic. He cries with His people. A true Friend He was and is. Others say that He cried because He also here saw the terrible results of sin in the death of His bosom friend.

We believe there is something else here to which God wants to call our attention. Isn't this a part of the Gospel of John? And doesn't John in his Gospel account set forth the amazing truth that God as Savior has come into the flesh? So it is also in John 11, this chapter.

The setting is that Jesus is approaching the end of His life. He will perform one more miracle, in the eyes of the people the greatest of all. Why? That men may know that He is the Son of God in the flesh, that only God can perform such supernatural deeds, and that they will *believe on Him*. This latter thought is very prominent in the chapter. To the disciples He had said, while still in Perea (east of Judea) that He was glad that He wasn't at Bethany when Lazarus died, that they may *believe*. They must see Lazarus raised and see Jesus' power. When Jesus later speaks to Martha and Mary He says that He is the resurrection and the life, and that he who *believes* in Him though he die, yet shall he live. Further, vs. 25, He that *believes* in Him shall never die. At the grave later Jesus says to Martha, "Said I not unto thee, that, if thou *believedst* thou shouldst see the glory of

God?" In His prayer Jesus emphasizes His purpose of it all, "That they may *believe* that thou hast sent me." And what is the end of it all? This, some Jews told the Pharisees but many others when they had seen the things which Jesus did *believed* on Him.

God always calls people to faith. So it was in the wilderness with the Israelites. He did so throughout the entire Old Testament, but surely so when the very Son of God was in their midst.

This mighty miracle of raising Lazarus, who already for four days had been subject to the power of decay, does not take place to give Lazarus a few more years of "continual death" nor to give him the "privilege" of dying twice, but that the Jews would *believe* on Him. And from it all men must learn that He has and will overcome both the physical and spiritual death.

Notice what Martha and Mary say in that light, "O, if only Jesus had been there when their dear brother was so sick, critically ill." But now it's too late. That's the implication. A Savior that is distant from them physically means nothing to them. Poor people, indeed, who have such a Savior. Faith they have, yes for the future . . . in the work of God in the last day. But they don't reveal faith for *today* in a Savior who gives blessings in the heart, even though He isn't near physically.

And don't we all need just exactly that, faith for today, as well as for the future? That He is Lord today, of body and soul, many fail to understand. To them Jesus really is no more than some kind of magician who does wonders and tricks, but not a Savior from death and hell, giving His blessings always. How the Lord had preached and preached, and how He had done so many miracles to teach them the spiritual truth of it all! Within a few weeks He would say, "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." How often He had told them who He really is, what He came to do!

But Martha and Mary. . . O, if only the Lord had been there when Lazarus was so sick! But now he's dead. And they have no comfort for the present.

How they cry!

And Jesus also weeps! But why? For the same reason they did? Of course not! He sees that terrible unbelief, of even the very best of his followers and of his own dear friends as well as of the Jews. This thought is placed very strongly on the foreground in the verses 33, 37, and 38. You find there the word *groan*, that Jesus groaned in the spirit and was troubled. Why was He troubled? The word *groan* literally means that He was angry, emotionally upset. The commentator Lenski here uses the word, *indignant*. The Berkeley Version says that He was deeply *indignant* and *vexed*. The new Dutch translation uses a similar word, *verbolgen*. Why? And when? He saw Mary weeping and the Jews with her. All the more was His spirit stirred up when they asked, "Could

not this man, who opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died?" Must people ask, regarding the very Son of God, whether it is a matter of being able to do it? Couldn't He, couldn't He . . . ?

It is this that grieves Jesus in His human nature!

He is emotionally deeply upset. It is a simple fact that great emotional disturbances bring forth tears. Great sorrow produces tears and sometimes great joy will do the same. With Jesus there is a holy reaction over against all this unbelief. His emotions are deeply affected. In this holy reaction tears roll down His cheeks. This implies, of course, that faith on the part of the people would have caused Him to rejoice.

Profound questions arise in our minds and souls here. Couldn't Jesus who was able to raise Lazarus also have changed their hard hearts? Isn't He the Son of the almighty God, and therefore also almighty? We surely believe that God controls all things and all situations in His life and ours. But here we are dealing with the human nature of Jesus and the presentation of the Gospel. This presentation and God's counsel we surely cannot always harmonize.

Looking back we can see that Jesus intentionally waited until Lazarus was dead, that He might perform this great wonder. Again will He show them who He really is. Today this Jesus is Lord in heaven. Today He has all power in heaven and on earth. As the Savior who preaches the Gospel through all His servants, He calls those who hear to faith and repentance. His promises to His people are sure. He is ever near to all those who believe in Him, with His Word and Spirit. With respect to His Godhead, majesty, grace and spirit He is at no time absent from them. What a tremendous truth! As He let Lazarus die, He allows a lot of things to happen. Sometimes He lets the devil take over, and lets communism and other adversive powers have so much control. Nothing is outside of His control. But His promises are sure, and never fail for all those who believe and trust in Him. As Savior and Lord He is ever near His people. And true faith is never afraid, nor does it say, "If only, if only. . . ."

But . . . O that unbelief, that lack of faith and trust in this great, glorious Lord. Unbelief still characterizes so much of the lives of God's children.

But towering above it all, and extending to the very end of time are His great promises. They are the promises of that ever living, ever near, and exalted Lord. Faith, even childlike faith in this Lord gives peace. . . .

No, Jesus did not cry out of sympathy. He cried because He so much wanted people to believe. And he still wants us to do that today. Faith in that Lord, the very Son of God gives peace and eternal blessings.

That's the purpose of John also with this account in His Gospel. ●

PRAYER FOR NEIGHBORHOOD EVANGELISM

*O Lord, it is not hard to love
The heathen far away
Who've never heard Thy blessed Word,
The Life, the Truth, the Way:
Whose home is ghastly pagan
With idol worship. Such —
O Lord, our hearts go out to them,
We love them very much.*

*But 'tis another matter
The man across the street;
Who uses vile language
And scoffs when'er we meet.
He desecrates the Lord's Day
And doesn't seem to care:
O Lord, it is for these today
We lift our hearts in prayer.*

*'Tis true, perhaps they know the Way,
Yet walk in paths of sin;
May we not point the finger —
But seek to bring them in.
We need not show what we have done
For we have none to show;
'Tis only Thy great love alone
That these poor souls must know.*

*O Lord, in this our mission
We fail so miserably;
Forgetting we could be as they
Had it not been for Thee.
O give us greater vision, Lord,
And stir our hearts today:
That these be brought into the fold —
In Jesus' name, we pray.*

ANETTE JANSEN

DO I LIVE FOR HIM?

*Do I begin each day anew
In prayer to God above?
To seek His guidance through the day,
To praise Him for His love?*

*Do I awake with songs of joy
For having such a Friend?
Who, though all others may forsake
Will keep me to the end?*

*Do I arise and go about
My daily tasks to do
Content to know that I am His
And He will see me through?*

*Oh, may I live so close to Him
And trust His tender care;
That each new day may bring me joy
In knowing He is there.*

*My task will be a lighter one,
My path a brighter way;
Till life's long journey ended
Then dawns Eternal Day.*

ANETTE JANSEN

A LOOK AT BOOKS

Jay E. Adams: **YOUR PLACE IN THE COUNSELING REVOLUTION**. Nutley, N.J.; Presbyterian and Reformed, 1976. 44 pp. \$.95. Reviewed by William H. Kooienga, Glen Rock, N.J.

Jay Adams continues to write at a pace faster than some are willing to read. The flow of books and pamphlets testifies to a great sense of purpose and energy which he brings to his task. What, however, is the goal which Adams so actively pursues? The answer is "revolution."

The title might place him in a camp with pointless innovators, but no, this revolution is with purpose. The world of counseling is in a state of confusion. The evidence he cites includes the ludicrous example of twelve same persons sent to leading mental hospitals to test the accuracy of today's psychotherapeutic diagnosis. All were wrongly diagnosed as having serious "mental illness." Further reflection says that this is no laughing matter.

The solution to modern confusion lies with counseling based on the Scriptures. Christ has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of Him (II Peter 1:3). II Timothy 3:16 speaks of both inspiration and the equipment of the man of God. The Scriptures plainly teach that the pastor and the members of Christ's church bear the responsibility for assisting others with the problems of daily living.

After discussing the distortions present in attempts to add God to a humanist counseling framework, and the futility of trying to find biblical themes in essentially pagan solutions, he begins to share his dreams of revolution. Counseling is related to the mission task of the church. The church filled with troubled families loses its power to witness to the world. Proper biblical counseling is a prerequisite for effective evangelism.

Adams also shares the interesting observation that the fundamentalist-liberal battle of this century left the evangelical churches in a weakened condition. Such

churches were strong in knowledge of the doctrines necessary to combat liberal forces, but weak in the ability to apply biblical truths to daily living. He has no desire to undermine doctrinal knowledge, but urges that it be balanced by an emphasis on God's counsel for daily life.

To the final chapter is left the biblical description of a pastor and the responsibilities of church members in the counseling ministry. There is also a challenge to get involved in the revolution which has begun.

If ministers and others take Adams seriously (and many do), there will be a revolution in the church. The old gods of humanistic psychology and psychiatry will be toppled from their lofty position in the hearts of too many in the church. As a stimulating introduction to healthy changes in the field of pastoral counseling, this little book serves its purpose well.

THE WORKS OF RICHARD SIBBES; Edited with Memoir by Alexander H. Gorsart, *The Banner of Truth Trust*, pages CXXXI and 445, price \$1.95. Reviewed by Rev. Elco H. Oostendorp, Hudsonville, Michigan.

This is a reprint of an edition of the works of Richard Sibbes originally published in 1862. There are six other volumes in that edition, but this first one contains the writings of Sibbes published in his lifetime and under his personal supervision. Richard Sibbes (1577-1635) was a Puritan preacher at Gray's Inn and lecturer in Cambridge University. He was popularly known as the "heavenly" Dr. Sibbes because of his character and the spiritual emphasis in his sermons.

The Memoir by the Editor gives a rather detailed account of his life and writings. He lived and ministered during the exciting and difficult years of the rise of Puritanism and experienced much opposition from the high-church party. He had contacts with the leading people of the time. Gorsart has done a great deal of research and his enthusiasm and admiration for the Puritan cause come through strongly. Sibbes' most famous work was "the Bruised Reed," which was instrumental in the conversion of the well-known Richard Baxter. This is a series of sermons on Matthew 12:20 (quoting Isaiah 42:3). In later editions the sermon form was changed and the whole divided into twenty-eight short chapters. A second major work, almost equally well-known, is "The Soul's Conflict, And Victory Over Itself By Faith." This was a series of sermons on Psalm 42:10, but like "The Bruised Reed" it is also divided into chapters; it covers 159 pages of small type. In addition to these two major works there are several sermons, among which is a series of five on I Peter 4:17-19.

Sibbes was a staunch Calvinist and his sermons contain much solid theol-

ogy. As is characteristic of the writers of that period (the so-called "Oude Schrijvers") his strength is emphasis on the experiential aspects of salvation, involving knowledge both of sin and grace. Dr. J. I. Packer writes on the dust jacket: "Known in his own day as 'the sweet dropper' because of the confidence and joy to which his sermons gave rise, Sibbes concentrated on exploring the love, power and patience of Christ, and the riches of the promises of God. He was a pioneer in working out the devotional application of God's covenant of grace." In the publisher's Preface it is said that C. H. Spurgeon and Dr. Lloyd-Jones both recommend the works of Sibbes very highly and found him a rich source of information and inspiration. Need I say more?

JOHN CALVIN: A BIOGRAPHY by T. H. L. Parker. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1975. 190 pp. \$10.95. Reviewed by John Bratt.

Is there warrant for a new biography of the Geneva Reformer? The obvious answer is that there is if a new contribution to Calvin studies is forthcoming. This one by a professor of theology at the University of Durham in England, a leading authority on Calvin, purports to be that. The author of this charmingly written, freshly-researched work concedes that there are no new hard facts emerging (you can find those basic facts in the major biographies of this century: Walker, 1906; Reyburn, 1914; Hunt, 1933 and MacKinnon, 1936) but insists at the same time that the vast changes that have taken place in our world in the last 40 years and the contributions to Calvin studies by Karl Barth and the Roman Catholic scholars who now deem him not a "heretic" but a "separated brother" warrant another full scale biography.

In this work Dr. Parker does illuminate further the background, giving a rather full description of student life in the times of Calvin, and he comes up with some redating including the date of Calvin's conversion. Reputable Calvin scholars like Ford Battles and the late J. T. McNeill acknowledged the paucity of our data on this question but felt inclined to set his conversion to Protestantism sometime between 1532 and 1534. Parker argues for an earlier date. He finds most crucial in this question a passage in Calvin's preface to his *Commentary on the Psalms* (1537). Others found their basis for judgment in Calvin's *Second Admonition to Westphal* and in his *Reply to Sadoleto* but Parker does not think that they speak directly to the issue. On the basis of his analysis of the preface passage he comes to the conclusion that Calvin's conversion occurred at Bourges in the course of his law studies. And it was at Bourges, so he claims, that Calvin began preaching and expounding the Scriptures to the evangelicals of the Protestant faith. It is true, he concedes, that Calvin did

not resign his "benefice," the grant-in-aid that enabled him to further his education, until 1534 but that was, says Parker, because Calvin did not at once see the ethical implications of his newly-found faith. What keeps Parker's case from being totally convincing to my mind is this fact that Calvin, with his quickness of discerning implications, kept on receiving monetary help from the Roman Catholics some four or five years after he broke with them. But all in all this is a substantial contribution to Calvin studies.

UNCLE BEN'S QUOTEBOOK by Benjamin R. De Jong. Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Michigan. \$7.95. Reviewed by Rev. John Vander Ploeg.

Well-bound, intriguing in format, and chock-full of home bits of wisdom and spiritual counsel, *Uncle Ben's Quotebook* is a 304-page compilation of clever and wholesome quotations gathered by the author from various sources over a period of fifty years; and, in the process, put to use by him while a Christian school principal, later in the ministry, and more recently as an instructor and counselor at Grand Rapids School of Bible and Music.

Never having met the author, I nevertheless feel that he is no stranger to me because of my fifty-year acquaintance with his brother, Rev. Frank De Jong, whose wholesome wit and humor we, his classmates, enjoyed so much in our student days at Calvin Seminary, and also still appreciate from an occasional meeting or by way of a letter from distant California. One of the quotes in Uncle Ben's book suggests a desirable and probably a family trait that must have stood both Ben and Frank in good stead during their long years of Christian service. The quote: *A child of God should be serious without being sour, and happy without being foolish.*

When used with discretion, selectively, and without failing to cultivate one's own originality as we should, Uncle Ben's book may contribute a bit of spice to what could otherwise be a dull performance in the classroom or even on

the pulpit. This compilation is arranged under topics listed alphabetically.

A brief example: "Don't speak unless you can improve the silence."

A longer one under EXAMPLE:

A careful man I ought to be,

A little fellow follows me.

I do not dare to go astray

For fear he'll go the selfsame way.

Not once can I escape his eyes;

Whate'er he sees me do he tries.

Like me he says he's going to be,

That little chap who follows me.

I must remember as I go

Through summer sun and winter snow,

I'm molding for the years to be -

The little chap who follows me.

Uncle Ben's Quotebook is a treasure-trove of interesting and edifying quotations among which may be found nuggets of wisdom; yes, even "words fitly spoken like apples of gold in pictures of silver." Also an unfailing source of suitable and pithy sayings for the church bulletin board.

CHURCH GROWTH IS NOT THE POINT, by Robert K. Hudnut. Harper & Row, Publishers, New York, N. Y. 10022. xi, 143 pages. \$7.95. Reviewed by Henry Petersen.

The Rev. Hudnut, a Presbyterian minister in Minneapolis, is author of seven other books. This book is a sequel to his *The Sleeping Giant* and *Arousing the Sleeping Giant*. In all three he maintains that "most churches could be two-thirds smaller and lose nothing in power. In most churches, the first third are committed, the second third are peripheral, and the third third are out."

This book is provocative because the chief emphasis in our day is on numerical church growth and how to achieve it. People are concerned, even worried, because the church today is losing rather than gaining in membership. Hudnut says that the loss in church membership is a God-given opportunity to "turn the world upside down" for Christ. "Church growth is not the point. The point is whether the church is being true to the Gospel."

In seventeen short but powerful chapters the theme of the book is developed. To be true to the Gospel we must toward God, be obedient, be passive, rather than active. This means that we must let God work in us and through us. We must learn what it means to be saved by grace, empowered by the Holy Spirit, and to live the Christ-like life. In order to be what God intends us to be we must be born again, converted, and then be servants (slaves) of Jesus Christ. We must be nothing that God may be all. The book abounds with Scriptural references and examples.

It is refreshing to be directed away from the often subjective and self-centered piety of many evangelicals to a God-centered and objective Christian faith in action. Read this book to be challenged and perhaps corrected.

APOCALYPTIC by Leon Morris. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids. 1972. 87 pages, paperback, \$1.95. Reviewed by Rev. Jerome Julien, pastor of the First Christian Reformed Church of Pella, Iowa.

This little book has as its purpose to explain the form of literature common in Biblical times called apocalyptic. It is not a profound piece of work by the author's own admission. In that way it becomes a valuable piece of writing. A student or an advanced scholar would benefit from this short, clear and to-the-point book. Many of the short chapters deal with various characteristics of this kind of writing. As you perhaps know, the Book of Revelation is commonly considered an apocalyptic book and of course because the word itself appears in the Greek text of the first verse. The author points out, however, that the last book of the Bible is more than apocalyptic. It is also prophecy, as the book also tells us. To understand the Book of Revelation it is helpful to know the characteristics of apocalyptic but thankfully the book is more than that. In Revelation there is the Gospel.

This little book from the pen of the Principle of Ridley College in Melbourne, Australia, is a very helpful little book and worth reading.