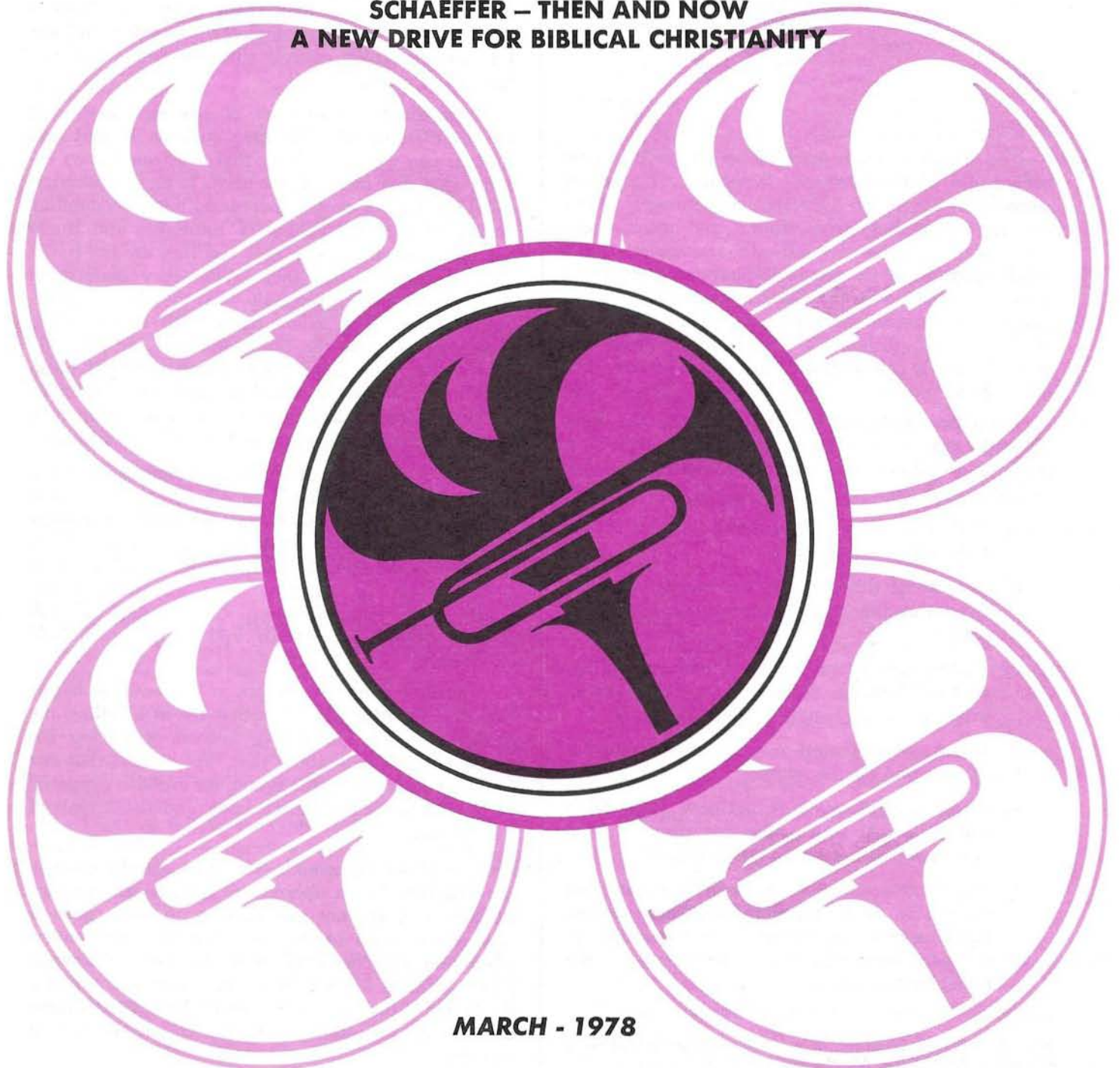


# The Outlook

**PLAYING GAMES WITH THE CREEDS  
SCHAEFFER – THEN AND NOW  
A NEW DRIVE FOR BIBLICAL CHRISTIANITY**



**MARCH - 1978**

**DEVOTED TO THE EXPOSITION AND DEFENSE OF THE REFORMED FAITH**

# playing games with the creeds



REV. JELLE TUINGA

The other day I was catching up on reading some back issues of *Gereformeerd Weekblad*. I read an editorial by Dr. H. N. Ridderbos concerning the controversy surrounding Dr. H. Kuitert, and how a recent synod dealt with this matter (for the so-manyeth time). While reading the account of Ridderbos, I thought to myself: the leaders in the Gereformeerde Kerken are playing games with the confession. They are guilty of confessional dishonesty — both Kuitert and the synod which is called to adjudicate the matter. Let me explain.

Ridderbos starts out by saying that by this time the entire procedure in these matters had taken on a predictable pattern. The standard “model” (Ridderbos’ word) was once again followed. It goes like this:

- a) Kuitert writes a controversial book or article which evokes reaction;
- b) Because of this reaction, the matter comes to Synod; on the floor of synod there is more reaction;
- c) Kuitert says people have misread and misunderstood him; he did not really say or mean what opponents took him to say or mean;
- d) Synod gives Kuitert opportunity for further clarification on the matter;
- e) After his clarification, Synod says: Why didn’t you write that way in the first place, so that people would not misunderstand you?
- f) Not all objections have been removed, but enough so as to prevent disciplinary action. Synod appoints a committee or deputation to do some more talking with Kuitert about the remaining objections.

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Rev. J. Tuininga is pastor of the First Christian Reformed Church of Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada.

Well, there we have it. For the so-manyeth time, Kuitert is off the hook until the next time, and then we’ll go through the procedure again — *ad nauseam*.

We play games. We keep the pot boiling, but don’t let it boil over. Kuitert back-tracks enough to satisfy the synodical brothers, and the synod compromises enough to make Kuitert happy so that he can prepare for the next round. That way a “catastrophe” is avoided, but the worst catastrophe is slowly taking place: the complete eroding of the confessional integrity of the church.

Kuitert is not the only one guilty of this. Boelens, another minister in the Gereformeerde Kerken who previously served in our Christian Reformed Church in Canada, used the same tactic. He wrote a book to which Dr. K. Runia took sharp exception. Boelens reacted by saying: You completely misunderstand me. I meant something entirely different from what you take me to mean.

Confessional dishonesty! There’s no other word for it. First of all, able men such as Kuitert and Boelens can write clearly so that everyone knows exactly what they mean. There needs to be no misunderstanding. And, of course, there is no misunderstanding either. Men of the caliber of Ridderbos and Runia can read and understand well, and they are not trying to read between the lines. What they understand these men to write is precisely what they have deliberately written. But, when the crunch comes, when there’s danger that the pot might boil too violently into a disturbing controversy, these men will back-track using the excuse that they have been misunderstood. I cannot understand how it is possible for them in good conscience to sign the Form of Subscription.

What is even further beyond my comprehension is how a synod can continue to put up with this kind of dishonesty. The synod, in fact, has the greater guilt. It is responsible for upholding the confessional integrity of the church. In handling these matters it is destroying that integrity. Such dishonesty is unworthy of the Church of Jesus Christ, called the “pillar and ground of the truth” and pledged to uphold its creeds.

Understandably, Ridderbos is not entirely happy with the situation. He says that by so handling the matter, synod is *diagnosing* instead of *solving* the problem. He’s right about that. Yet he says that one can’t too much blame the synod, for synod is supposed to be a deliberative church body and not a club of theologians.

I do blame the synod. The synod is obligated to see that the church upholds its *confessions*. Kuitert, Boelens, etc. are not just dishing up some new or interesting points of theology, but they are undermining the churches’ confession. As long as the synod permits this to happen, one cannot expect a turn for the better in the Gereformeerde Kerken. Unless there is genuine repentance the church needs radical surgery.

# WHAT THE HISTORY OF THE HEIDELBERG CATECHISM MEANS TO ME

LE ANN DYKSTRA

The Heidelberg Catechism has meaning for us today, because of its history as well as its contents. It relates to us in our situation today because of when it was written, why it was written, and by whom it was written.

The Catechism was written in Germany at a time when the religion of the state or province changed as often as the ruler did. A Christian, Frederick III, came to power, and ordered it to be written. Soon it became very popular, and spread to other countries of Europe, including the Netherlands. In fact, Dutch was the first language into which the Catechism was translated from the German. This affects me since I am of Dutch descent, and the Christian Reformed Church also originated in the Netherlands.

The Heidelberg Catechism was written in 1563, about 50 years after the beginning of the Reformation. At this time there was still a lot of confusion concerning what was the correct way of thinking and living, and the right person to follow. The Catechism helped the people understand the teachings and views of the various Reformers who were leading the church back to God's Word. In it they had something to fall back on when questioned about their faith. The Catechism is useful in times of stress. When people of other religions ask us what we believe, we too can use it to help explain what we believe.

It was written by Ursinus and Olevianus, two men who were friends of Frederick. They were both young, one 26 and the other 28 years old. They weren't old men with years of religious experience to help them, but rather had to write down, with God's help, what they knew or felt in their hearts to be the truth of God's Word. I feel that they knew the problems and struggles of youth, and this helps me relate to them and what they wrote.

*Le Ann Dykstra is a senior at Western Christian High School in Hull, Iowa. She wrote the paper for a Catechism class at the Ocheyedan Church and its pastor, Rev. Marvin Van Don-selaar, sends it in as an appreciative reaction to the "Land-mark" series' introduction to the Catechism's history.*

## 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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# HONORS TO DR. CORNELIUS VAN TIL

PETER DE JONG



DR. CORNELIUS VAN TIL

Readers of *Christianity Today's* last 1977 issue were confronted by a full-page front cover picture of Dr. Cornelius Van Til. Inside a five-page feature article by the former senior editor, David E. Kucharsky, described the way this one-time Christian Reformed pastor of the Spring Lake church has in a half century of teaching apologetics, over forty of them at Westminster Seminary in Philadelphia, gained a reputation as one of the staunchest defenders of the Christian faith in the academic world in our time. Although "Van Til has been perhaps the most controversial of the really great thinkers of the twentieth century," the article observes that, personally "he is gracious, gentlemanly, humble and considerate" and "highly charitable toward those with whom he disagrees."

## The Professor's Lighter Side

The article mentions the lighter side of life in his classroom where "he has been enough of a wit to arouse gales of laughter among his students. He admits to throwing chalk at anyone who dared to doze. 'One of these bullets drew blood,' he says. 'The next class the victim of my violence wore a steel helmet.'"

## Standing on God's Inerrant Word

Asked by the interviewer, "How do you know that what you believe is true?" Dr. Van Til replied, "I am sure of my faith because its source is the Bible, the revealed Word of God." Asked whether it doesn't then become necessary to prove that the Bible is true and really is the Word of God, Dr. Van Til's answer is that a Christian must assume this because the Sovereign God has claimed it. Recognizing this claim of God requires that we acknowledge the inerrancy of the Bible. To pretend, in order to argue with unbelievers, that we must begin on neutral ground that they too will accept, as many Christian scholars have done, is already at our starting point contradicting the truth we are trying to prove. No one can prove the claims that God makes if he starts his line of argument by conceding that those claims may or may not be true. That starting point is already a humanism, a worship of man that puts him and his ideas as judges

above God and His revelation. In other words, we must stop betraying the gospel in the way we try to win the unbeliever. This is essentially Dr. Van Til's position as it is described in this article and as it is worked out in his many books. It is Dr. Van Til's conviction that humbly beginning with what God has said, we must call "spiritually dead people to repentance and life," laboring "always to win people to the triune God of Scriptures." Faithfully doing this, he maintains, demands that we, in the academic world as well as elsewhere, not neglect "to declare the wrath to come for those who reject God." Dr. Van Til would "like to be remembered as one who was faithful to him, 'from whom, through whom and unto whom are all things.'"

## A TRIBUTE TO CORNELIUS VAN TIL

Over the span of a career approaching fifty years Cornelius Van Til has attracted many students to Philadelphia. They wanted a defense of the faith that is methodologically consistent with the faith. His apologetic stands in stark contrast to the classic deductive and inductive rationalism that they had found religiously and scientifically dissatisfying.

Van Til, the pedagogical performer, proved as vigorous in lecture and discussion as the polemics of his writing would suggest. Every student of Van Til can instantly recall the characteristic Van Tillian blackboard graffiti: the foremost symbol being two circles, a big one for the creator, the other for creation with no ontological bridge between. The entire history of philosophy or Christian thought, including most heresy, would be strewn in names and phrases across the board. He scrawled Latin, Greek, German, and Dutch wherever there was room. By the time he finished lecturing his hands, his clothes, and even his face would be chalk-smudged.

Van Til composed complete syllabi for his courses that were virtual textbooks, in many cases en route to publication. His students treasured those syllabi and quoted from them as if they had already been published. Few of his students could easily digest his running critique of the different historical forms of apostate thought, the unfortunate wedding of Christian theology to the apostate system, and his own constructive "theontology" based on the ontological trinity, the creator, and the creator's analogue, man.

The consumption of chalk and the whirl of ideas were symptomatic of an excitement generated not from brilliant eruditions, though some of his skyrocketing digressions could be called that, but from the strong and systematic emphasis on the antithesis between a biblical world and life view and the several intellectual and scientific versions of the carnal mind. Students began to see how far-reaching were the differences between believer and non-believer. For example, the problem of finding a common ground for discussion with non-Christians became a matter of making clear what God has freely given to all of us. Students felt that their minds were freed from a twentieth-century way of thinking. Van Til's task was to make both despisers and defenders of the faith

“epistemologically self-conscious.” For him the journey from philosophical apologetics to evangelism was a mere adjustment in style, not in basic content.

To a man of Van Til’s radical vision, there is much to deplore in the world and in the Church. Yet Van Til is magnanimous, hopeful, and ecumenical; sometimes these qualities come through when he is most polemic. I recall his debating liberal and neo-orthodox champions at Boston University. He graciously, respectfully, but incisively told them that they were going to hell. Van Til lives what he believes.

— T. GRADY SPIRES, former student of Van Til and associate professor of philosophy, Gordon College, Wenham, Massachusetts.

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The Reformed Fellowship has from its beginning been deeply appreciative of the labors of Dr. Van Til to maintain and defend the Christian faith in the cross-currents of life and thought in our time. It has appreciated his support and encouragement often given to its own efforts in the same cause. There is reason for thankfulness to God that Dr. Van Til’s faithful labors are gaining the growing recognition and influence which this *Christianity Today* article indicates. Many people all over the land are becoming weary of prevailing confusion and double-talk and welcome plain speech that says what God has said. May people everywhere be drawn to and join in the same confession.

Our deepest sympathies are extended to Dr. Van Til in the recent death of Mrs. Van Til. Let us pray that the Lord may continue to use and bless the 82-year career of His servant.

The interested reader who would like to become acquainted with Dr. Van Til’s view of the way we should try to maintain and defend the Christian faith may find that one of the simplest and most useful introductions to it is his little 20-page booklet, *Why I Believe in God*. Copies may be obtained from Great Commission Publications, 7401 Old York Road, Philadelphia, PA 19126, for 30¢ each. PDJ

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## Alcoholism

HARRY VANDER KAMP, M.D.

### A Continuing Serious Problem

To some this word evokes a feeling of disgust. To perhaps a few, a feeling of sorrow and compassion. To many families alcoholism has brought havoc, tragedy, hopelessness and utter frustration. To all Christians it

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*Dr. Vander Kamp, a retired physician, was for many years at the Veterans Neuropsychiatric Hospital near Battle Creek, Mich., where for the past 10 years alcohol and drug addiction has been the chief problem encountered. Disturbed by observing the increasing prevalence of the drinking problem also in our churches, he calls attention to it in this article.*

is a matter of deep concern. They are reminded of the words of Saint Paul, “no drunkard shall inherit the Kingdom of God.”

Alcoholic beverages have been used from ages past. Noah drank shortly after the Flood. Israelites did. So did kings and peoples of pagan countries. The first recorded miracle of our Saviour was to turn water into wine and that of an unusually good quality. Wine was used at the Last Supper and became symbolic of Redemption. Paul advises Timothy to use wine for medicinal purposes. Thus, like so many things, it can be used rightly but it also can be misused.

Today the user of alcoholic beverages can be classified either as a social drinker or as an alcoholic. The social drinker drinks what the host offers him, for the purpose of making the meal or social gathering more pleasant.

The alcoholic, in contrast, drinks stealthily. He drinks when no one see him and hides his liquor. Often he drinks the first thing in the morning, rationalizing that it will fortify him to meet the problems of the day. He will have experienced what is commonly called “black outs” and also “the shakes.” There has been Monday absenteeism from his work with a false excuse. The foreman has warned him of his poor workmanship and absenteeism. He loses his job and his credit rating. Meanwhile there has been severe marital discord ending often in divorce. His creditors are hounding him. Eventually the condition becomes unbearable, he moves to a distant city, takes a different name. There he is a stranger, eventually dies and is buried in a paupers grave. For many life is terminated by suicide or a fatal auto accident due to drunken driving.

### Frustrations of Help

For the alcoholic there is but one alternative to addiction and that is absolute sobriety for the rest of his life. Many programs stress education and rehabilitation. These are often very expensive, often government subsidized, meaning that you the taxpayer are the one who is actually paying for them. The results of these programs have not been impressive. The reason for this is that one cannot grasp or understand the behavior of the alcoholic. What one considers might be helpful can actually be harmful. Walter, an alcoholic, came to me and said, “Doctor, at long last I have come to recognize that I am an alcoholic.” I told him that was a very important step towards rehabilitation. He went on to say that it would be difficult for him to get a job since people were aware that he was an alcoholic. He then asked me to assign him to our photographic department since he would be working in the dark room developing films. Since no one would see him while working in the dark room he would not be visible to the public. He was assigned to this detail. I am sure many readers have already determined the outcome and wonder how I could have been so naive. The dark room was the ideal place on the hospital grounds to hide his liquor.

### Medication and Motivation

How can an alcoholic attain and insure sobriety? We have medication called Antabuse which will help him achieve this. It has been on the market a long time. It is not experimental. An alcoholic knows all about it. He knows that if he takes his tablet and swallows even a very small amount of alcohol he will experience a most uncomfortable reaction. There will be a throbbing in his head and neck, marked sweating, vomiting and chest pains. This reaction occurs only with the combination of medication and alcohol. The medication alone is harmless. Experience has shown that only a few alcoholics will continue to take the medication. The medication cannot provide the essential ingredient to sobriety which is motivation. The Spirit of God provides that. In a few instances the action is miraculous. Usually the Spirit acts through the means of grace. Every Christian is well aware of the means of grace he must use, such as prayer, Bible study, church attendance and fellowship with other Christians if he is to maintain Christ-oriented daily living. So too, an alcoholic must avail himself of antabuse, and Alcoholic Anonymous, with the means of grace Christians use.

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# SCHAEFFER - then and now

REV. JOHN J. BYKER

Francis Schaeffer, in his own lifetime, has gained international fame and popularity. He provided a haven in the 1960's for many confused, disillusioned people, frustrated by decades of subjectivism and its results. The initial period of his work, the establishing of L'Abri, for which he became world famous, has ended. This is an appropriate time for us to consider the questions of what his role has been and is.

### How It Began

The Second World War had scarcely ended when Dr. Francis Schaeffer left his work in a flourishing congregation of the Reformed Presbyterian Church (Evangelical Synod) to move with his family to Europe. His purpose was to investigate the effects of modern philosophy and the war upon the faith and life of the church in Europe. This work took root in Switzerland and resulted in the establishment of L'Abri (the shelter). That story, of how, from a tiny beginning of fellowship with students in their home, L'Abri came to be a shelter for hundreds, mainly youth of many nationalities, is told in the book *L'Abri*, written by Edith Schaeffer, wife of Francis Schaeffer.

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*Rev. John Byker who has been pastor of the Second Toronto Church is on leave of absence living at Allendale, Michigan.*

Through the work centered in Switzerland, Francis Schaeffer became an international figure by means of his writings and the untold numbers who heard him and spread his message.

### Six weeks at L'Abri

In 1970 I had the privilege of spending six weeks at L'Abri. At the turn of this decade, requests to stay, visit or study, far exceeded accommodations, a situation which has changed drastically. The program at L'Abri was strictly educational, with one message; there are absolutes in the sea of relativism; these absolutes can only be derived from God's Word, the Bible, where God has spoken in propositions that can be understood. Those who came to L'Abri were instructed by means of lectures, reading assignments, tapes of lectures previously given by staff, by a limited number of visiting scholars and in question and answer sessions.

Two dollars and fifty cents per day covered living expenses. This unbelievably low rate was possible because students were assigned work details, keeping the cost of labor to a minimum. From among the students, craftsmen of every trade were recruited to repair masonry, plumbing, plastering, do the gardening, cleaning and any and all chores needed in the operation of such an endeavor.

The period of the 60's to 70's was convulsed with young people on the move. They came from all points of the globe and all strata of society. Disillusioned and rebelling against a philosophy which made life meaningless, they came to L'Abri, a place of shelter. Here, in the quaint village of Huemoz, Switzerland, in a loving, caring, and disciplined setting, the philosophical problems which effected all were analyzed and illustrated, help was offered for individual needs, and answers given to perplexing questions.

Schaeffer's work was supported by a goodly number of talented assistants. All of these, however, were overshadowed by Francis Schaeffer himself. Generally speaking, the assistants were members of the L'Abri Foundation, a very select group which controlled the operation. Membership in the foundation was by invitation and required a period of probation before acceptance into the Foundation. The initiate, once granted full membership, was committed to carry out the wishes in service of the Foundation. Some asserted that this meant the wishes of Dr. Schaeffer. This policy was criticized as too restrictive for a Christian organization.

A very enjoyable and profitable aspect of the educational program was mealtime, especially the dinner hour. Students and counselors rotated twice daily, lunch and dinner, assignments being posted each evening. Lively, varied and beneficial discussion arose from the constant flow of questions, topics and problems raised by students from varied backgrounds and orientations. Mealtime was a truly enriching experience. We can only be thankful that many disillusioned people were given new Christian understanding and guidance in such a setting.

## New Developments

Although the subsiding of the rebellion of the 60's, with the demand for L'Abri services has diminished drastically; the problem which gave rise to the "shelter" at Heumoz has not abated. The popular reaction has changed from rebellion, to acceptance of the goals of affluence and personal liberty, against which the people of the 60's rebelled. I am of the opinion that this change has largely determined the course which Dr. Schaeffer has recently followed. Last year 10 films, and a companion book under the title *How Then Should We Live*, were released. This production was in the making for more than two years, and, I am informed, at a cost of over a million dollars. This series of films is designed to give one a perspective of contemporary history in the light of past ages, to enable the viewer to understand the problems confronted in our lifetime and to present the gospel as the only solution to these problems. The accompanying book, *How Then Should We Live*, and other supplemental material is well done and very helpful. Extensive reviews of this material are available for the interested. I personally have found the method of the use of film and supplemental literature profitable. Dr. and Mrs. Schaeffer have traveled extensively throughout the United States and Canada promoting these films and the large crowds which attend these appearances attest to their popularity.

The initial response to the promotion and showing of the films has diminished. The latest endeavor by the L'Abri Foundation is the sponsoring of Travel Tours to the various sites depicted in the film and book, *How Then Should We Live?* I am not able to say what the precise objective of this new venture might be. It seems to me to have little value because a very limited number are likely to benefit and the exposure is so brief and superficial. One might more profitably remain at home and study the book or history books. Surely, if one plans to go on this tour he should definitely make an intensive study of the book and related material mentioned above to derive substantial benefit. I do not believe that this type of endeavor will enhance Schaeffer's image nor that of the Foundation.

### A Missionary

A number of reasons may be cited for the broad acceptance of the Foundation's work. The foremost, no doubt, is the charisma of Francis Schaeffer and his commandment to the cause of historical Christianity. This, coupled with his able scholarship, produces an oasis in the arid philosophical desert. He ably communicates meaning to lives rendered empty by existential philosophy. For these reasons, he has been designated "the missionary to the intellectual." He is that indeed, but to many, many more than the intellectual.

### Points of Disagreement

As a theologian, Dr. Schaeffer has made concessions which I feel confident he did not originally espouse. I recall, for example, that his view of elec-

tion was unclear. God's election appeared to be conditioned by man's ignorance of God's message. I heard nothing of a doctrine of hell. The doctrine of creation was skirted, or at best, unsatisfactorily dealt with.

Dr. Schaeffer has stated that if he were not a Christian, he would be an agnostic. Professor Cornelius VanTil's teaching on propositional revelation has been credited with rescuing him from agnosticism. However, two basic points of disagreement have increasingly separated the two men. Whereas VanTil teaches that no man can know God or find him out without the supernatural work of God's Holy Spirit, Schaeffer teaches that the existence of God and Christianity is rationally demonstrable and therefore demands acceptance. However, I personally do not find Schaeffer clear in his presentation. Although he demonstrates the untenability of other systems, he does nothing which establishes Christianity on a rational basis. This position is set forth in his book, *The God Who Is There*, but more particularly in *God Is There and He Is Not Silent*. Some of the later writings of the author have carried him further down the line of his peculiar brand of rationalism. I am unaware of any in-depth study on this aspect of Schaeffer's work. It is needed, and I hope we will soon see some student produce such a work for his thesis. In so far as his work is guided by a form of rationalism, it will soon pass from the scene. We are assured, however, that that which the Spirit of God initiates and blesses will prosper.

The second closely related point of disagreement is the point of contact with the unbeliever. VanTil maintains a Christian cannot meaningfully discuss with an unbeliever by adopting his presuppositions or standing on his foundation. Schaeffer holds the opposite. These points of disagreement, have, in my judgment, led Schaeffer to some very unfortunate positions.

### The Strength of Dr. Schaeffer's Work

Those who have had contact with Francis Schaeffer cannot help but be impressed with his ability to read history. His knowledge of history, art, philosophy and Scripture, opens for him such insights. He has, for example, predicted the social revolution, and the rise of the ecological and abortion issues, beside many other present-day events, before they caught popular attention.

Unless there is a return to the propositional revelation of Scripture, revealing God's objective standard outside and apart from history, Schaeffer predicts we will all experience as substitutes, totalitarianism, the death of science and further dehumanizing of man. Interestingly, Schaeffer conjectures that for the occident, more particularly the United States, the pathway to authoritarian rule or dictatorship will be by way of the courts. In that light, the issues of *U.S. News and World Report*, January 16 and 30, 1978, carried a very enlightening article on this subject, "Are Judges Getting too Powerful?" The article

made interesting, meaningful reading in light of Schaeffer's conjecture.

Schaeffer has more recently distinguished himself from the neo-evangelicals. In 1974, the World Evangelical Conference at Lausanne produced a statement on Biblical Infallibility stating that the Bible is infallible in all it intends to teach. Dr. Schaeffer's continuing objection to that limitation of Bible infallibility appears to have tarnished his image for some leaders in the neo-evangelical cause.

The message from the founder of L'Abri, his insistence on God's clear, biblical propositional revelation, has basically remained the same. This message alone gives the church a right to speak to our tortured generation. For heralding this message we owe Schaeffer a debt of gratitude. Well may we pray that he and others may more clearly and loudly sound it forth and that the Holy Spirit may abundantly bless this message to a world in despair. ●

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## NEW DRIVE TOWARD BIBLICAL CHRISTIANITY

PETER DE JONG

### Signs of Evangelical Revival

*Time* magazine in a December 26, 1977, 7-page featured article announced that "U.S. Evangelicalism is booming." It estimated that the movement numbered 45.5 million adherents, suggested that it "seems on the verge of becoming a national state of mind," and endorses a claim that "Evangelicals have become the most active and vital aspect of American religion."

Already in the fall of 1976 (Oct. 25) *Newsweek* in a similar leading article on "the Evangelicals" entitled "Born Again" observed that "the emergence of evangelical Christianity into a position of respect and power" was "the most significant — and overlooked — religious phenomenon of the 70's." It cited a Gallup survey report that "half of all Protestants — and a third of all Americans — say that they have been 'born again.'" What it found "even more surprising" was "Gallup's report that 46 per cent of Protestants — and 31 per cent of Catholics — believe that the Bible is 'to be taken literally, word for word,' a doctrine held only by the most conservative Christians."

Commenting on this same development in a less flamboyant style, John R. De Witt could observe in the October, 1977 *British Banner of Truth*, "Particularly in this country there seems to be widespread renewal of interest in evangelical Christianity; and

what is more significant perhaps, we are seeing also a recrudescence of interest in Reformed theology and church life. The new state of affairs is reflected in the student body of many seminaries; and the Reformed Theological Seminary (at Jackson, Miss. — editor) is no exception to this. One is grateful to God, and one is thrilled at the opportunity to have a share in equipping earnest, eager young men for the service of Christ. Many of us are most encouraged at what the Lord is so evidently doing, and we have great hopes for the future."

### A Deepening Concern for the Biblical Foundation — The Need of the Evangelical Movement

The 1976 *Newsweek* article already mentioned observed that "Despite the evangelicals' newfound strength, a number of serious divisions have opened up within their ranks. Evangelicals are sharply divided over fundamental religious issues such as the infallibility of Scripture and what they think the Gospel requires of them as born-again Christians." The recent *Time* article, while not analyzing this part of the development as clearly as the earlier *Newsweek* did, clearly shows up the confusion that prevails among those called "Evangelicals." "It is easier to see signs of Evangelical life than to define exactly what an evangelical is." If the movement is to be more than a passing wave of emotional excitement or a confusion of diverse groups who move off in many different directions, it needs clear definition and direction. And what is to define what an "Evangelical" should believe and do? The very name "Evangelical" suggests that one who bears it is supposed to be a follower of the Gospel or Bible.

As *Time* remarked, Mainstream Protestantism . . . often seems drained of vitality." The weakening of the convictions and influence of those churches as they lost their faith in the Bible and its teachings is well-known to our readers. The new Evangelical movement if it is to prosper needs *Biblical* definition and direction. It is by the Word of God that men are "born again," said the Apostle Peter, and by the same Word that they must grow (I Peter 1:23; 2:2).

### The New "International Council on Biblical Inerrancy"

To meet this need for Biblical definition and direction in the current Evangelical movement is the expressed aim of a newly formed organization which could prove to be one of the most interesting and promising developments in the religious world in our time. It sees the big and booming Evangelical movement threatened by both a weak sense of Biblical direction and by new attacks on the Bible among its adherents. To deal with that need an "International Council on Biblical Inerrancy" met in Chicago late in September and according to a report in the November *Eternity* (p. 12) plans a ten-year program to study and defend biblical inerrancy and to educate and inform the evangelical community of the doctrine's importance." The Council sees evangelical Christians as having to make a choice between "the existential



methodology of Kant, Kierkegaard, Barth and Berkouwer" and "standing with Christ and the apostles for the historic view of verbal inerrancy."

The organization considers this inerrancy controversy about Christ in the fourth century and that about the doctrine of salvation in the sixteenth century. At the same time it aims at "loving dialog" with "brothers" who disagree "rather than to cut them off from fellowship or discussion." Jay Grimstead, its executive director, said, "We are committed to speak . . . in a way that will be considered loving, wise and scholarly." It intends to publish material that answers the much neoorthodox and higher critical writing which is confusing many evangelical Christians.

Associated with the new Council are respected and influential people from a variety of churches: James Boice, Gleason Archer, Edmund Clowney, Norman Giesler, John Gerstner, Harold Hoehner, Donald Hoke, J. I. Packer, Robert Preus, Earl Rademacher, Francis Schaeffer, R. C. Sproul, Jay Adams, John Alexander, Bill Bright, W. A. Criswell, James Kennedy, Elizabeth Leitch, Roger Nicole, Harold Ocken-ga, Ray Stedman, and Merrill Tenney.

Some are deploring the beginning of this "inerrancy campaign," saying that we should work for evangelical unity, not dispute with other evangelicals, and that we should obey the Bible and not argue about it. But, it becomes increasingly evident that this issue must be faced for the good of the whole evangelical movement. How may we seriously try to persuade others to believe and obey the gospel if we refuse to face the questions of what the gospel is or of Who or what is to decide what it shall be? Seeking and holding to the answers God's Word gives to such questions would appear to be indispensable if we are going to make any progress in doing His business.

#### **Our Place: On the Sidelines, or on Which Side?**

The role of our own Christian Reformed Churches in these times of opportunity and in these new and exciting movements for the Christian faith is on the whole disappointing. Although we have a denominational reputation as champions of the Reformed Faith, the evangelical revival and the enthusiasm for the Reformed doctrines of the Bible which others welcome and share, seem to be leaving us largely untouched. I have not read any Christian Reformed names among those Orthodox Presbyterians, Reformed Presbyterians, Missouri Lutherans, Southern Baptists and others who through the new Council on Biblical Inerrancy are calling and working for reformation and revival based on God's Word. One of the main reasons why we are not taking an active part in these exciting developments is that up to the present our denominational leadership is trying to evade or compromise the question of what we believe regarding the Bible. And spectators, fence-sitters or rooters for the enemy will never win any games or battles. Let us pray that the Lord may yet arouse and move us to take the stand we should with His Word in the battles and victories of that Word in our time. ●

## *Meditation*

# THE AWFUL BUT BEAUTIFUL GETHSEMANE



REV. JOHN BLANKESPOOR

**Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane. . . .** Matt. 26:36ff.

When one speaks of Gethsemane and tries to understand something of what happened there a certain awe enters his soul. The name suggests profound mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. When we try to discuss it we peer into depths to which we see no bottom. We are talking about the immeasurable suffering of the Son of God. An account of the suffering and obedience of Jesus in His love for us would not be complete without a reference to Gethsemane. Who does not know the song:

*Lest I forget Gethsemane, Lest I forget Thine agony  
Lest I forget Thy love to me, Lead me to Calvary.*

Gethsemane is awful in telling us how God's Son suffered in the flesh for us, but beautiful in telling us how thoroughly human our Savior was in this revelation of His love.

\* \* \* \* \*

It was dark in the olive orchard, at perhaps, about ten o'clock on Thursday night. The next day would become "Good Friday." Jesus and the disciples had left the upper room after the Passover had been celebrated, the Lord's Supper instituted, and Judas had been dismissed. They had all sung a hymn.

Going east they crossed the brook Kidron, the same stream that David had once crossed centuries earlier when he fled in fear and sorrow from his son Absalom. Here, where there may have been an olive press, the Son of God was put into God's press. And He almost died, for Matthew says that His soul was sorrowful unto death. Something apparently so deeply troubled and terrified His soul that He almost died.

Remember that this was God in the flesh. The writer of the letter to the Hebrews speaks of Jesus' strong crying and tears. He who was God was crying out loud because of the agony. One translator uses the word "bellow." Having been born and reared on a farm I can still hear a cow bellow in agony. It made the chills go down my spine. Imagine, He who was the Infinite God, yet in the dust, "bellowing" like

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an animal! Who can understand or describe this? Language is always inadequate to describe experiences and feelings. Who, for example, can describe the sorrow of a mother's heart upon the death of her child? Who, then, can even begin to explain these spiritual, heavenly mysteries in man's language? We may only be amazed and like Moses take the shoes off our feet when we approach something so holy and Divine.

\* \* \* \* \*

What really happened here?

We think of Jesus' life and recall how He had always been master of the situations in which He found Himself. When as King He had made His royal entry into Jerusalem He was in command. Also on the previous night in the upper room, when the devil was there in Judas, the betrayer, He was in control. They had even been able to sing. Now, suddenly . . . here was Gethsemane.

One might try to answer the question of what was happening by saying that Jesus was now faced with the suffering to come, somewhat as we are when we have to go to the hospital for major surgery and the anticipation of what is about to happen suddenly grips us. But have not many people faced great calamities and even death with courage? Think of Socrates fearlessly drinking the poisonous hemlock. Throughout history there have also been thousands of people who faced death on the battle field with courage, and martyrs who sang while dying. How then can we explain the attitude and action of Christ?

We must always remember that Jesus was Unique, by Himself. He could be compared with no other. His suffering was the penalty for sin. One would really have to be in hell to understand what was tearing Jesus' soul apart. There people pay the ultimate penalty for sin.

We must also remember that man is appointed to die. He has no choice regarding that. Death is his lot. But it was not so with Jesus. It must be and was His choice to die. He must die voluntarily. Otherwise His death would be no atonement.

Remember also that when man dies he is usually busy especially or only with himself. But Christ was the Head of His people, of millions of sinners and ungodly people. He must pay the penalty for all of these people.

Another difference between Jesus' death and others' was that when the Christian dies in faith He looks beyond death and grave. But Jesus could not comfort Himself with that at this time. It was all dark. There are surely more differences. But we must always remember that Jesus' suffering was in a class by itself.

Jesus' suffering may be partly understood in the light of the fact that Jesus saw the devils coming in Judas and the mob that accompanied him. The "dogs and bulls of Bashan" were going to attack Him (Ps. 22:12-16). (Bashan was a mountain in Israel. Wild dogs roamed in the valleys and wild bulls grazed on the grassy slopes. These animals were extremely dan-

gerous. And so devils could be called dogs and bulls of Bashan.) Hell was let loose. Jesus felt that. Soon they would be upon Him.

But even all of these considerations do not fully answer the question why He suffered. The final answer must be that here God was beginning to forsake Him. For Jesus this was terrifying. Constantly throughout His life He could "find" His Father and enjoy the assurance of His nearness and His promises. Now that was changing. The late Dr. Schilder compared Him with a ship that is coming out of the stormy sea and entering the harbor to be moored at the pier. The pier is always solid and dependable. Christ wants to moor the ship of His soul to the solid pier of His Father's faithfulness and justice. But the awful fact was that now God was receding from Him, the pier was sinking away, solid ground was receding and the ship was left alone to drift in the stormy sea. An intense soul struggle followed. Jesus was on His knees, His face in the dust. Who knows what it means to sweat blood? Did you ever try to imagine what He must have looked like after he stood up, bloody sweat mixed with dirt and mud on His face? Remember He was God! Also here the Lord says, "Behold your God! See His love . . . Gethsemane . . . awful, but also beautiful!"

\* \* \* \* \*

He conquered. Although God already here forsook Him, He did not forsake God. He was submissive in the greatest hour of trial, willing to "drink the cup to the last bitter dregs." This was part of His atonement, of His payment for sin, the sins of His people. As a result of this we may be assured now and throughout our lives, even in our worst trials, that the pier will never recede from us. The Lord's promises stand. He will always be faithful to those who trust in Him, in spite of their failures. He is our Lord today.

Wonder of Bethlehem! But also, wonder of Gethsemane! O come, let us adore Him! ●

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## THE GEREFORMEERDE KERKEN AND US

REV. J. TUININGA

What is striking if one reads the addresses of the fraternal delegates of the GKN to our synods of the last number of years, is that, almost without exception, they make a strong plea for understanding, patience and a degree of acceptance for what is taking place in their churches today. Between the lines one can almost read: What are you people here in North America so worried about? Things are not as bad as you think, and besides, sooner or later you will be facing the same problems. So just take it slowly, and relax.

What these delegates apparently don't seem to understand is that such an approach does the exact opposite of what it is intended to do. It does not put us at ease, but rather raises our suspicion and concern even more. If these delegates would frankly admit that there are serious deviations from the truth in their churches, and that they too are very concerned about them and are determined to correct them with all due haste, then our fears would somewhat subside. If these delegates said: We really appreciate your deep concern for our doctrinal integrity, and we want you to keep expressing this concern to us, in order to help us along, then we would be so much more ready to listen, and also to have patience. But by and large one does not hear this. We are rather made to feel that perhaps we shouldn't be as concerned as we are. And that does nothing allay our fears.

The address by Dr. Rietveld to the Synod of 1977 was true to type. I was not impressed or pleased with it at all. He referred to a book he had written about the situation in their churches. But that book does not help to change our minds either. The well-known Professor at Apeldoorn, the Seminary of the Christelijke Geref. Kerken, wrote a review of Rietveld's book. I conclude with an excerpt from that review: This writing is written in the tone of: To know everything is to understand everything. . . .

Rietveld, who at the time received his degree on the topic "Secularization," is a master in analyzing and explaining. But to my notion that means that the author talks along far too much and as a result whitewashes the actual situation. To say it in a different way: Rietveld explains much, but he does not deal according to the norm of Scripture and confession. . . .

He is so caught up with the time and he listens so eagerly to the situation of today. The time (in which we live) is an authoritative something for him. And who will deny that time is an important factor?

But does a Christian not have the calling to gauge the time in which he lives, to examine it critically? Is it not precisely the Christian who knows that the spirit of the age is an important power in the hand of the prince of darkness? Why is no recognition given to the reality of the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the air? Why is it not possible that there could be an internal process of apostasy underway, and that the hearts of Reformed theologians are not immune to that? . . .

It is true, the author does not exactly take Kuitert under his protection, but he does try to bring up considerable sympathy for him, and he wishes to arouse that in his readers too.

But that is an extremely dangerous position, a position which has been adopted by many. One is not entirely in agreement with the new developments, he does have objections, he would not have come to that position himself, but one should have understanding, even respect, for people who try to understand our present time and above all the modern man. One should applaud the fact that newer theologians nowadays attempt to interpret the old Gospel for the

modern man. That it is then said in a different way at times than before is no objection. That will have to be accepted as part of the bargain.

But then we no longer have any resistance and we will be washed overboard; we can offer no opposition but must allow everything, and then one gets the situation where the Reformed life is hollowed out under the eyes and with the consent of those who know better, but who have eliminated themselves from the contest in advance through their much understanding. ●

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## THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH AND LODGE MEMBERSHIP



MARVA VAN KOOTEN

This is a 2nd prize winning essay in a contest sponsored by the First Church of Pella, Iowa. Marva Van Kooten is a student at Dordt College. Her earlier prize-winning essay appeared in the April 1977 OUTLOOK.

### The Historic Stand

Since its beginning in 1857 the Christian Reformed Church has taken a very strong stand against lodge membership. In fact, the Dutch Reformed Church's toleration of lodge membership among its members was one of the big issues which led to the Christian Reformed break away from that church. Because of the recent attacks on CRC's stand in this matter, this essay examines that stand.

The synodical report of 1900 best indicates the CRC outlook. By its definition a secret society is "such an organization which requires of everyone who becomes a member, unconditional concealment of all that pertains to the lodge, without officially informing the candidate of the contents of what must remain a secret, and which at the same time obligates its members to unrestricted or at least to an insufficiently restricted, assistance and obedience."<sup>1</sup> With this defi-

niton, Synod did not indicate by name any certain secret Societies so that those not named would seem "less culpable."

Freemasonry, the largest worldwide secret society, will be the lodge considered more fully by this essay as an example representing also others. Freemasonry arose as a union for stone workers who built cathedrals. It didn't become the "modern" society as we know it today until 1717 when the Grand Lodge was organized in England. Since then it has grown rapidly, despite an anti-Masonic drive in the early 1800's, until in 1964 one out of every twelve men in the U.S. was a member. Anyone may enter though he might encounter some difficulties. The candidate is promised that the lodge will provide the light of spiritual instruction which he could not find elsewhere; and if he lives and dies according to Masonic principles, he will reach the "celestial" lodge. Some essential features of Freemasonry which distinguish it from other secret societies include "their methods of recognizing other members, the right to visit any lodge, the belief in "God" and the immortality of the soul, and the belief that all Masons are equal." Freemasonry also represents many aspects of religion through the use of temples, altars, prayers, a moral code, worship and feast days, reward and punishment in the after life and many rites. Many people receive the impression that it is a Christian institution because of the presence of the Bible and appointment of chaplains, besides all of the above. However, this impression couldn't be farther from the truth; the lodge forbids the use of Christ's name in prayer or the reading of Bible passages and many Biblical doctrines are ignored, i.e., the Fall, the Incarnation, etc. . . . The lodge is actually a popular rival religion.

Many lodge members accuse non-members of misunderstanding the lodge's ideals or philosophy because of lack of information. However, we get information not only from books, pamphlets, etc., which the lodges themselves publish to educate both the new members and general public, but also from ex-members who have broken their vows because of their own hurt and shame or less praiseworthy causes. Those who leave because they come to realize the lodge's ungodly character are the most truthful when it comes to revealing the practices of the secret society, whereas lodge members themselves cannot be reliable because of their oaths pledging secrecy regarding these practices. From all these sources comes the verdict that lodges are essentially anti-Christian in character as is seen in W. P. Loveless' (An ex-chaplain of the Masonic Lodge) judgment, "The whole structure of lodge procedure is built upon the erroneous teachings of the universal brotherhood of man; and the necessity for salvation alone by grace thru faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is entirely ignored."

#### Objections to Lodge Membership

The Synod of 1900 in its complete report, leveled several criticisms against the lodge:

1. Their oath is very careless and sinful which could lead to the concealment of all possible

evil. Such is wholly unpermissible, a misuse of God's Holy Name. The Christian "yes" should be looked upon as thoughtful and reliable as the most fearful oath.

2. The unrestricted promise of mutual aid has at times led to treason and murder in the higher degrees of the Freemason hierarchy. Favoritism in the community and controlling the ballot box within the State obstructs the discipline and government of Church, State, and society.
3. Because they are sinful in principle all sorts of ungodly people join them. The lodge thus introduces a brotherhood of man which draws the Christian in with these ungodly people. This is putting on the yoke with the unbeliever, a union of Christ and Belial.
4. Since these people are ungodly they indulge in many practices and pleasures which should be repulsive to the Christian, especially the initiation ceremonies, which can be harmful to the point of even at times causing death.
5. The religion of the lodge is a denial of the only true religion's teaching that salvation is thru faith in Jesus Christ and it is, in short, a mockery of Christianity. It places its own teaching of salvation through works and entrance to the Grand Lodge "up above," over against that of Christianity.
6. The unconditional promise of obedience even before the candidate knows the lodge's edicts, laws and rules is to be strongly disapproved.
7. Several objections are listed under this point, but the main one is that the secret society "as it manifests itself in its various ramifications, is in conflict to a greater or lesser degree with all of the (Ten Commandments as set forth by God)." "It can safely be said that he who joins the lodge sins . . . for the God of . . . Lodgism is not the God of the Bible and of the Ten Commandments."

#### The Churches' Practice

The question then is how to deal with Church members who have joined the lodge. In the Synod of 1867 it was decided that "church members who join such a society shall be excommunicated after all attempts to make them see their error have been fruitless." Those who belong to a secret society already but desire to be received into the church as members and allowed admittance to the Lord's Supper cannot be. Their profession of faith is unacceptable. "The membership of the lodge is sin, not just a momentary sin but a constant living in sin. It is therefore a gross sin for everyone, but especially for a member of the church."

Since the CRC's adamant stand in 1857 this issue has been very much alive and just recently has become a real threat to CRC unity. The Synod in 1900 made a very clear case but minutes of our own First Christian Reformed Church in Pella show there were a few problems before this.

From Minutes of Pella I CRC – February 7, 1898, “a case of the membership of one of our [members] (Pella I) in a lodge was to be investigated. The matter was to be discussed with the member.”

From minutes of Pella I CRC – January 30, 1898 “much patient labor has been bestowed on this member. He has always been faithful attending public worship. The Consistory thus far has not been successful in convincing the member to sever his connection as a member of a secret society.”

It can safely be assumed that if this member did not “sever his connection” from the lodge he would have been excommunicated.

Between 1900 and 1957 this 1900 report was all that was needed. A request for a reaffirmation of the synodical stand on lodgism by Classis Sioux Center in 1957 was denied because as of yet no church had departed from this stand and it hadn't been challenged thru ecclesiastical channels. However the request by Classis Sioux Center and Orange City also in 1957 for the translation of the 1900 report (which was then only available in Dutch) was approved. In 1958 this translation into modern Dutch and English was approved and added to the *Acts of Synod 1958*.

#### Recent Agitation for Change

Then in 1969 Classis Lake Erie made an overture to change the CRC stand on Secret societies “contending that our present synodical statements regarding the lodge do not adequately reflect the complex organizational character of today's society and that our present synodical pronouncements severely curtail evangelistic communication with lodge members.” Synod told them to make their own study. In 1970 Classis Lake Erie submitted the report along with four recommendations. In this report Classis Lake Erie could raise no objections to CRC's historic stand admitting that the lodge upheld a false religion antithetical to the Christian religion. Nevertheless, in its recommendations the Classis still desired more flexibility in the application of this position to those seeking admission into the church, particularly in respect to those who fail to see the inconsistency of lodge membership and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. They requested that the admission of these members be left to the discretion of the consistories. The Synod of 1970 rejected especially this last request on the grounds that Classis Lake Erie did recognize their incompatibility and even though the admission of members is the concern of local consistories, there are certain matters on which all churches must agree to a uniform policy. This decision followed the statements in the 1900 report. The Synod of 1970 however did appoint a committee to write up an effective contemporary statement reflecting the CRC's position which would be valuable in it's evangelism outreach. Because of the division within this study committee and uncertainty as to its precise mandate the 1972 Synod appointed a new committee with the same mandate which was to put the church's position in up-to-date language. Some members of the previous

committee had gone a step beyond this and had requested Synod to rejudge its position. They spoke of certain circumstances in which lodge and church membership may be compatible, especially in the case of nominal and inactive lodge members who are converted through contact with our church. The new study committee was unable to bring a report to the Synod of 1973 due to illness and other unforeseen delays. On its presentation to the Synod of 1974 the 63-page report was accepted, the church's stand strongly reaffirmed, and a new committee appointed to prepare a popular pamphlet embodying it. Still not satisfied after five years of failing efforts with three synodical committees and Synods, Classis Lake Erie requested a new study committee which was denied by a badly divided Synod. In 1975 however, Synod again appointed a new committee by request of Classis Lake Erie to “research the content, confessional character and function of the oath in the relationship of the lodge members to their oath bound societies.” The 1977 Synod again strongly affirmed the Church's historic stand. This hopefully will settle the matter indefinitely.

#### Evangelism and the Lodge

What seems to motivate the biggest drive toward granting the compatibility of Church and lodge membership is concern for evangelistic outreach. There has been an increasing pressure to forget the scruples of Christianity and accept many compromising positions. It can be painful to lose candidates for members, or even whole churches as in the case of Classis Minnesota North in 1972, but the CRC wants quality to be their guide not quantity. The Lord examines a Church's purity and faithfulness not how large her membership is. In Classis Minnesota North the members of the Plymouth Presbyterian Church of Sauk Rapids voted to stay out of the CRC denomination on learning of the unacceptability of lodges to CRC. This was hard for the Classis to accept after extensive working with this congregation. To these people lodgism is more important than affiliation with our churches.

This case also illustrates the Lord's teaching “no man can serve two masters,” the Christian must make a wholehearted commitment to Christ with no turning back. He must forsake the world and be separate from it. “Whosoever would be a friend of the world maketh himself an enemy of God.” Classis Lake Erie contends that some lodge members may hold only a formal membership without a confessional commitment. But they haven't taken into account “corporate responsibility.” The 1945 Synod adopted five points applying to “Corporate Responsibility.”

#### Corporate Responsibility

Summarized from *Church Order*:

1. Active participation in the sinful practices of an organization to which one belongs not only renders one guilty before God, but may even make one an object of ecclesiastical discipline.

2. In order to be responsible for (these) sinful deeds . . . it is not necessary to be an active participant. . . . By requesting, promoting, encouraging, or in any manner abetting the wrong doing, one is rendered responsible, even if the support which one gives amounts to no more than consent or approval.

3. In order to be responsible . . . mere passivity or silence also renders one guilty; failure to reprove makes one accountable before God.

4. Even if a member doesn't encourage and does reprove, he yet involves himself in corresponsibility if one remains a member of such an organization.

In the light of this one cannot assume a "formal" membership without also being responsible for the confessional stance.

In conclusion, the CRC stands in opposition to the lodge chiefly because of the lodge's anti-Christian character. The lodge actually claims itself to be a religion in which man can be saved by man. Its ethical basis is humanistic and it operates on utilitarian grounds. It teaches salvation by character and good works instead of salvation through Jesus Christ. This is not a biblical Christianity but rather a modern paganistic corruption of Christianity. It places Christianity on the level of Islam, Buddhism, etc. The so-called religion of the lodge is actually a secret return to the pagan ceremonies and rites of heathen religions in which Christians have NO RIGHT to participate. The Church cannot compromise its faith by associating with this religion of the modern world.

1. *Acts of Synod 1958*, p. 417.
2. Van Groningen, Gerard, *OUTLOOK*, "Freemasonry and the Church" (April, 1973), p. 16.
3. Monsma, Martin, and Van Dellen, Idzerd, *The Revised Church Order Commentary* (Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1972), p. 296.

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## OUR QUESTION



REV. HARLAN G. VANDEN EINDE

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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.

The question of this reader is: "It says in the Bible if we pray in faith believing that God will hear us, then he will answer our prayer. But if we have prayed in faith, relying on the promises of God, and he answers us in the negative, how can it be then that he does not answer our prayers? It says his promises are yea and amen in Christ Jesus."

I presume that the reader has in mind such passages of Scripture as I John 5:14, "And this is the boldness which we have toward him, that, if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us," or John 14:13, 14, "And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask anything in my name, that will I do".

Some people have interpreted these texts to mean that God has given us a blank check and invited us to fill it in. In other words, we can ask for whatever we want, and expect God to grant it. But is that what these texts mean? Is that really the teaching, the full teaching, of Scripture about prayer?

It is important to notice the phrase "according to his will" in I John 5:14 and the phrase "in my name" used in both of these verses of John 14. Those phrases qualify or place a condition on our prayers. Not just anything for which we ask will automatically be given by God, but that which we ask "according to his will" and "in his name."

You see, real prayer is communion with God, so that there are common thoughts between His mind and ours. What we need is to have Him fill our

hearts with His thoughts, so that His desires will become our desires flowing back to Him in prayer. If we ask anything *according to His will* or *in His name*, He will hear us. But what is it to ask anything according to His will or in His name? Surely it means more than simply concluding our prayer in Jesus' name or for His sake. To ask anything in the name of Christ is to ask in harmony with what Christ is! It is to ask as if Christ Himself were the supplicant! We can only ask God for what Christ would ask, if we are to meet the conditions of praying "according to his will" and "in his name." So that is not like receiving a blank check in which we are invited to fill in the amount we desire, but it is to spread our need before Him, commit our way to Him, and leave Him to answer as seems best to Him. Martin Luther put it well when he said: "Prayer is not overcoming God's reluctance, but laying hold of His willingness." How important it is then to have the "mind of Christ" in us as we pray!

Let me conclude with a couple of illustrations from the Bible relative to prayer. When Lazarus of Bethany fell sick, his sisters, Mary and Martha, sent word to Jesus saying: "Lord, behold he whom thou lovest is sick." They desired His help, to be sure, and must surely have hoped that Jesus would come immediately and heal him. But their request recorded in Scripture went only as far as spreading their need before the Lord. Was Jesus mute to their cry? They may have thought so, for Jesus stayed two days in the place where he was before He finally went to Bethany. He had a purpose in mind for waiting as He did, but the point to be made here is the proper attitude of the believer in the hour of need.

A second illustration is Paul's request for the removal of the thorn in his flesh. Three times he asked that it be removed. Was his prayer answered? Yes it was, though not in the manner he desired. But it was answered in that he was promised and given the grace to be able to bear it.

There are times, you see, when we selfishly pray for the removal of a given problem, and then think if it isn't removed, God hasn't heard or answered us. But if God, through that problem, determines to give us greater faith or more grace, then that is a more glorious answer than the removal of the problem itself. God does hear and answer prayer, but always "according to his will."

We must be very careful in our prayer life not to try to reduce God to our servant, one who is always doing our bidding, performing our pleasure, granting our desires. Rather, let our prayer life be a coming to God in faith, telling Him our need, committing our way to the Lord, and leaving Him to deal with our request as seems best to Him.

If the reader is interested in pursuing this subject more fully, I would recommend reading from Arthur W. Pink's book, *The Sovereignty Of God*, chapter nine entitled "God's Sovereignty and Prayer." ●

## In Memoriam

### MR. SIDNEY DE YOUNG

1906 - 1978

REV. JEROME JULIEN



MR. SIDNEY DE YOUNG

With the sudden death of Mr. De Young the Reformed Fellowship lost its highly valued vice president. Rev. J. Julien, pastor of the First CR Church of Pella, Iowa, who also served with him on the Fellowship Board has consented to write this tribute.

There is a strange beauty in the funeral of a Christian. It is not free of grief of course. No one enjoys missing a loved one. It is a sharp cut when death severs from him. However, the Christian's funeral is merely a ceremony marking the translation of a member of the Church Militant to the Church Triumphant. Its strangeness, as far as the world is concerned, comes in the second victory which rings through that ceremony because of what our Savior Jesus Christ has done.

On February 1 such a ceremony was held. Several days before - Sunday, in fact, Mr. Sidney De Young was ushered into the REST of which that Sunday was only an earthly emblem. The emphasis in that ceremony was on victory. Mr. Dick Gootjes concluded the service playing "The Hallelujah Chorus" on the organ, at the request of the family. Do they grieve? Of course. A husband, father, grandfather, brother is no longer with them. But knowing the comfort of the Lord they do not sorrow as those who have no hope. The Rev. Richard Veldman, long-time friend of Mr. De Young, opened God's Word, speaking on II Corinthians 5:1-10. At one point he said that if Sid could know what was taking place there at the funeral he would say, "I feel so sorry for you" because for him "the sigh of death has merged into the Song of Moses and the Lamb."

Growing up in a godly Covenant home where the Word was central, he learned early to confess that his sins were great and that were it not for the wonder of God's grace in salvation he would have no hope. How precious God's Sovereign Grace was to him!

Through that training in his Covenant home he

learned the importance of the Church. Through his life he actively served the Lord in that Church he loved. After spending his earliest years in the Dennis Avenue and Eastern Avenue Christian Reformed Churches of Grand Rapids, he spent his remaining and very fruitful years in the First Protestant Reformed and Faith Christian Reformed Churches of the same city. In both congregations he served in the office of elder. In the First Church he also served as deacon. For some twelve years he served on the Christian Reformed Board of Foreign Missions, several of those years as treasurer. More recently he was able to serve the Lord on the Board of the Reformed Fellowship. Always he was known for his positive testimony and spiritual graces. His advice showed the beautiful Covenant upbringing that had been the Lord's blessing to him. I often benefited from his spiritual advice while serving seven years as his pastor at Faith Church.

In the business world he also made an impact, giving testimony of his faith in Jesus Christ. Before retirement he served as one of the Vice Presidents of the Union Bank and Trust Company.

How he loved to hear the Word preached — and how he loved to study it. That Word brought music to his soul. His joy was based on what God in His Sovereign mercy had done. What happy fellowship he knew with those of like faith.

The truth of God's Covenant was precious to him, too. He early learned to love it. In God's mercy he and Mrs. De Young raised three children. Before the Lord called him home he was able to rejoice in the birth of his first great-grandchild. They were ever in his prayers. What spiritual benefit was theirs as their father led them in the way of God's Covenant!

When our children heard that "Grandpa" De Young had been called home to his Lord, they said, "Now we won't hear him sing in church anymore." He loved to sing of the lovingkindness of the Lord! No, children, loved ones, you who came to know Mr. De Young as a father, husband, spiritual father and friend, you will not hear him sing in church anymore. Now he is singing the Song of Moses and the Lamb!

All glory be to God!

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## jottings from the secretary

The mail in recent weeks has brought news from several of our chapters.

We were happy to learn about the organization this past fall of a new chapter in the Winnipeg area. The secretary, Mr. Thede Bakker writes, "The impetus for starting a chapter stems partly from the decisions which are currently coming from Synd." We welcome the Winnipeg Chapter and pray God's blessing upon them as they join us in contending for the faith delivered unto the saints.

The Puget Sound Chapter was organized September 16, 1976 at a meeting held in the Lynwood, Washington, Christian Reformed Church. The past year

has been an active one for this group. Several general meetings were held during the year. The speakers at these meetings included the Reverends H. Vander Kam, Allen Petroelje, Peter De Jong and Tom Vanden Heuvel. The chapter which began with a charter membership of 23 has experienced growth. Four newsletters have been published.

The Canadian Affiliate at its November meeting elected new officers. The December NEWSLETTER was a special issue on dancing. A copy of this issue was sent to the consistory of each Christian Reformed Church in Canada.

The Board of Reformed Fellowship recently held a testimonial dinner at the East Paris Christian Reformed Church in honor of our retiring editor, the Reverend John Vander Ploeg. Mrs. John Vander Ploeg, Mrs. Peter De Jong, wife of our new editor, and Mrs. Mary Kaiser our Business Manager were present as guests. Our newly elected president, Dr. R. O. De Groot spoke appropriate words acknowledging the contributions of the retiring editor and expressing our thanks first of all to our faithful God and then to Rev. Vander Ploeg for the services rendered during the past seven years.

A special word of thanks is extended to chapter secretaries who regularly send copies of minutes and newsletters to the undersigned. We are interested in hearing about your activities and in reading what you are publishing.

REV. ARTHUR BESTEMAN, *Sec'y*

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## Peril or Power?

REV. F. VAN HOUTEN

If you ever feel downhearted read Luke 10:1-24. Jesus sends out the seventy missionaries during His ministry and empowers them with a mandate.

Frequently we call John the Baptist the usher for the Lord Jesus Christ, but these men were ushers too. We read that our Lord "sent them ahead of Him to every town and place where He was about to go." There is a sense in which all preachers of the Gospel have this same charge.

### Christ's Power

Many people talk of the power of sin in their lives and the might of the devil. Preachers warn against wicked forces in our world today, and we surely have to do that. But a preacher should never forget that Jesus has said, "All power is given unto me" (Matt. 28:18). When one as a herald goes ahead of Christ in this way, he has nothing to fear. These early missionaries had a big responsibility to speak for Jesus because He would be following them soon.

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*Rev. Fred Van Houten is pastor of the Christian Reformed Church of Sully, Iowa.*



It was important that they represented Him faithfully. In preaching Christ one can expect the power of the Holy Spirit if he declares so great a salvation.

But it is not always easy to speak the truth and to stand up for it. Some people do not seem to be bothered about their sins; as in the days of the prophets, people said, "Prophesy unto us smooth things" (Isa. 30:10), many express the same preference today.

#### Christ's Ambassadors

The proper position of a preacher is that of an ambassador who comes in God's name and acts in Christ's place. Jesus said, "He who listens to you listens to me, he who rejects you rejects me, but he who rejects me rejects Him who sent me" (Luke 10:16). This text ties God, Christ and the preacher together. This same trio appears in the great ambassador text. "We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making His appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf; Be reconciled to God" (II Cor. 5:20). We often think of an ambassador's position as a political plum. He has an easy life living in a mansion, in some other capitol, in dignity and honor. But he has a grave responsibility. Speaking officially, he must know what and when to speak. If he says anything more or less than his government mandates, he will not hold his job very long.

At times he may be tempted to say too much or to speak too quickly as he sees things happening. At other times he may be tempted to remain silent because of an embarrassing situation. Resisting such temptations, he must speak and conduct himself responsibly. That, says the Apostle Paul, a preacher too must do.

#### A Responsibility for People

A preacher must diagnose the ills of the people and then bring God's remedy. As long as I live I shall never forget something that happened while I was serving with the Army in Germany during the Second World War. A man in our battalion came in on sick call and complained of pain in his chest. At that time I shared an office with the doctor. The doctor told him he probably had caught a cold. A corporal usually did not talk back to a captain, but this man told the medic he did not have a cold. The doctor sent him back on duty, and inside of a half hour he dropped dead. Then the doctor ordered an autopsy which revealed the bad condition of his heart. The least the doctor could have done was to put a stethoscope to his chest. The medical officer was there to diagnose rather than to judge. He judged the situation without a diagnosis, and then buried his mistake.

#### Listening to Christ

Luke 10:16 tells us it is a grave responsibility to preach the Word to people today. Maybe you would rather listen. But even when we listen, it is not always easy to do what we hear. When a preacher makes some truth plain and it is rejected, Jesus is rejected, and God is rejected. Jesus said, "If I had not come

and spoken to them, they would not be guilty of sin. Now, however, they have no excuse for their sin" (John 15:22). It is also a serious responsibility to listen to God's Word. The Word is powerful. It can save or condemn. What it does to us depends on how we hear it. "He who listens to you listens to me; he who rejects you rejects me; but he who rejects me rejects Him who sent me" (Luke 10:16).

## LESSONS FROM I JOHN



REV. HENRY VANDER KAM

Rev. Henry Vander Kam, until recently pastor of the Grace Christian Reformed Church of Kalamazoo, Michigan, is now serving the Christian Reformed Church of Lake Worth, Florida. The two articles in this issue bring to a close his series on I John.

Tentative plans are to place a similar series of articles by Rev. Vander Kam on I Peter beginning next fall.

#### LESSON 15

I John 5:1-12

### *Faith in Jesus*

John is indeed the Apostle of love and deals with this subject time and again in his writings. However, that love is the product of something else. Only those who have tasted of the love of God and are able to love the fellow believers who have a true faith in Jesus Christ. This is what it is all about. Those who have that faith in Jesus will also benefit from the assurance which this faith produces.

**A faith in Jesus as the Christ** — On this note the Apostle begins the last chapter of this epistle. Only those are born of God who believe that Jesus is the Christ. One of the major heresies which confronted the church at that time denied the identity of Jesus and Christ. This heresy attacked the fundamentals of the faith. Throughout this epistle John warns the people about the seriousness of this error.

Here the language is sharp and the argumentation is conclusive. If they do not identify Jesus with the Christ, they are not born of God! If they are not born

of God they have no salvation. Those who do believe that Jesus is the Christ receive all the benefits of which he had spoken before. This faith in Jesus as the Christ is God's work within them. By His Spirit He has wrought this faith. They now believe this and this faith becomes the expression of the heart and not only of the mouth. They believe this with all their heart and all their hopes are based on it.

**A faith of the highest value** — This faith is also of the highest value. Those who have this faith love their God. Only these can love God because they were born of Him. Then it follows naturally that they also love those who have been begotten of Him, i.e., the fellow believers. The communion of saints is the only true communion!

The love for fellow believers does not only consist of the vocal expression that we indeed love them. It always follows from something else. One first has to love God before he can love his fellow believer. How do we know that we love God? If we do His commandments.

**A faith that delights in God's commandments** — In verse 3 the writer explains this more fully. He reminds his readers again that our love to God is shown in keeping His commandments. Jesus had said the same thing of His disciples: "If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments" (John 14:15). The love which we have for our God is not just a feeling which is separated from the rest of life. It involves the whole life of man because it shows itself in the keeping of His commandments — in the doing of His will.

Concerning these commandments, the Apostle says that they are not grievous. This sounds strange to many people. The commandments of God are such that we are not able to keep them. They cover every part of life — both our relation to God and our relation to God and our relation to our fellow man. These commandments demand self denial. How then can he say that they are not grievous? He who does not possess the true faith; he who does not believe that Jesus is the Christ; finds the commandments of God to be very grievous! But, this is the accomplishment of the love of God and the power of the new birth, the commandments are not grievous for the believer. On the contrary, he delights in the law of God! It is sweeter to him than honey. It is more precious to him than silver or gold. It gives him wisdom — etc., etc. (Psalm 119).

**A faith that overcomes the world** — Not only does the rebirth give a view of the law which differs radically from the view of the natural man, it even overcomes the world. By the term "world" the Apostle means all that which opposes God. This is an ongoing process. The true child of God not only declares war on everything which opposes his God, he is able to overcome it! Faith overcomes the world and already is victorious. When faith has been implanted in the human heart, the victory over evil is already assured. Faith certainly is far more than a belief or a set of beliefs. It is a power, having its origin in

God, which controls and governs human life to victory.

All faith does not result in this victorious living. Jesus already complained about these "of little faith." Only those who believe from the heart that Jesus is the Son of God can realize this victory. He has to be content of that faith. The question: What think ye of the Christ — Whose Son is He? — must be answered correctly. This test separates the true faith from the false.

**A faith that Jesus came by water and blood** — Now follows a very strange and difficult verse. It is a verse which has been interpreted in many different ways. John tells us that this Jesus Christ came by water and blood. He then emphasizes the fact that He did not come with the water only, but with the water and the blood.

We believe the following to be the best interpretation of these words. In the days of John there were those who taught that Jesus was not the Christ (Messiah) at His birth, but that the Christ united Himself with Jesus at the time of His baptism. The Christ again left Jesus before His final suffering. So, Jesus could not be identified with Christ. He came into this world as a mere man, and He suffered as a mere man. John opposes this view very strongly. He was the Christ at the time of His baptism — witness John the Baptist's reluctance to baptize Him. He was also the Christ during His bitter suffering (blood). These heretics would overthrow the belief in the virgin birth and in the atonement.

The Spirit of God bore witness to the fact that Jesus was the Christ. This is very clear at His baptism. This witness is continued during His ministry and at the time of His suffering and death. The Spirit always witnesses to the Christ! He does this because the Spirit is the truth. Those who deny this truth, are liars.

The observant reader will note that verse seven of the King James version is not found in other versions. This is due to the fact that these words are not found in the original manuscripts. Very likely they were added by a copyist in the early history of the church. The loss of these words does not impoverish us because there are many other passages in the Bible which teach the doctrine of the trinity clearly.

**A faith based on the strongest possible ground** — There are, says John, three witnesses to the fact that Jesus is the Christ, e.g., the Spirit, and the water and the blood. The Spirit spoke even before His birth, the baptism shows that He fulfills all righteousness, and even a pagan said: Truly this was the Son of God, at His crucifixion. All three witnesses are in agreement, and every word is established at the mouth of two or three witnesses.

If we receive the witness of men (and we do) we certainly must admit that the witness of God is greater. Surely, no one would deny this. God indeed bore witness concerning His Son. Not once, but several times, the audible voice came from heaven stat-

ing: This is my beloved Son! We confess that Jesus is the Christ not only as we deduce it from His own words and works, but we have the direct witness of God. The belief in the deity of Jesus Christ rests on the strongest possible ground!

He that believes that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, has the witness to the truth of that confession dwelling within him. It is not the kind of a truth of which an individual has to be convinced intellectually. His faith in Jesus gives him the witness to that truth. He who does not believe has made God a liar. Notice the very strong language. Not only those who deny that Jesus is the Christ are liars, but all unbelievers are liars even though they have never taken a conscious position over against the Christ. They are liars because they have not believed the witness which God Himself bore of His Son. This Apostle draws the lines of distinction clearly between believer and unbeliever. He makes it crystal clear.

**A faith of the utmost importance** – The distinction which the Apostle has made between the believer and unbeliever is not only a theological distinction, but, it is a matter of life itself. We have received the promise of life, eternal life, on the basis of the finished work of Christ. This promise was already given to the patriarchs. Life, eternal life, was to be given to them. Now this life is derived from and is found in His Son. There is no other possibility. To receive that life the price had to be paid. The relationship with God had to be restored. This could never be accomplished by a Jesus who, though He was a great man and a wonderful teacher, was not the Christ, the Son of God. Our life depends on the truth of the confession that Jesus is the Christ! Thus the Apostle shows us the relationship between the true confession and the life of the present and future. Those who do not appreciate theological distinctions should take note and realize that one's theology determines his life.

When the Apostle speaks of having the Son, he, of course, does not mean that we can possess Him. No, He possesses us! He uses this terminology to describe in the strongest terms our relationship to Him. It is a union with Him of the whole person of the believer. His faith is not only an intellectual assent, but his relation to Jesus Christ involves his whole being. **That** is true faith in Jesus. Those who possess that faith have the life which was promised them. That is the eternal life which is also a present reality. It is not a life which still awaits a future revelation, but it is the life which they **now** live. On the other hand, those who are not so related to Jesus Christ do not have that life either now or in the future. Again, in very simple language John makes the distinction as sharp as possible.

Although John is usually called "the Apostle of love" and Paul "the Apostle of faith," this distinction must not be pressed too much. The love, of which John speaks so often, flows out of the true faith in Jesus. The way in which he describes that faith in this section, while, at the same time, denouncing the

heresy which strikes at the heart of the gospel, is just beautiful. If we have that faith we have life. If we have that faith we will love. If we have that faith we have hope. Everything hinges on that faith in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the living God!

#### Questions for discussion:

1. Is any view of Jesus of significance if it does not face the question: Whose Son is He? Explain. When people deny the deity of Jesus but say many "nice things" about Him, should we be glad?
2. Why do you think it was so difficult for people to believe that Jesus was divine? Do you wish you would have been living while He was on earth?
3. Is textual criticism a proper discipline? Does it bother you that some words found in the King James version are omitted in others?
4. We often hear that Paul was so much sharper in his criticism of the opponents of the cross than John. Would you agree?
5. Theology determines life. How far should we go with our theological distinctions? Can one go too far?

#### LESSON 16

I John 5:13-21

### Conclusion

The Apostle is coming to the end of his epistle. There are still a few things which he wants to emphasize, but the body of the epistle is finished with verse 12. John now applies some of the things of which he has been writing and introduces some new items. Seeing it is the conclusion of his letter, the movement from the one subject to the other is now more abrupt.

**Assurance of faith** – All the things John has written in this epistle were for the purpose of giving the reader an ever greater assurance of faith. They seem to have been downcast and he has written to them to remind them of the great riches they possess in their faith in Jesus Christ. They have eternal life. The life of the present time has been greatly enriched by it and the future is secure.

John has been writing to those who are believers, and not, first of all, to those who are still outside the fold of Jesus Christ. The believers needed reassurance. They had come to the faith but that faith had been attacked and they were not so sure of its permanency. John tells them that this faith will win. It will conquer every attack made on it and will give a peace of heart to the believer which is beyond understanding. They must, of course, remember that these benefits come only to those who believe on the name of the Son of God. Jesus is this Son of God and salvation is only in Him.

**Boldness in prayer** – Those who have eternal life also have the boldness that they may call upon their

God. They have access to the throne-room of the universe. They, seeing they are His children, may come to Him with all their needs. There they may ask anything *according to His will*. This is an important element for them to consider.

Many questions are asked concerning prayer, not the least of which is: What may we pray for? Calvin says: "By this phrase (according to His will) he wanted to tell us in passing that the right rule of praying is when men subject their wishes to God. For although God has promised to do whatever comes into their heads, but has laid down for them a law of proper prayer." Praying according to His will means that we pray according to His Word—where He has made His will known! Prayer and the reading of the Scriptures must always go together. Prayer without the Scriptures leads to subjectivism and the Scriptures without prayer leads to a sterile spiritual life. Those requests which are made according to His will are heard, and if they are heard, they are answered. The Scriptures do not know unanswered prayer!

Since we know that He hears us we already have that which we prayed for, says John. This sounds strange to us. We pray for something (according to His will) and we already have the petitions we have asked of Him. Oh, it is true, we may not receive the complete answer immediately, but in principle we already have it. It is somewhat analogous to the experience of Simeon when he sees the child Jesus. Even though Jesus must still be baptized, must go through temptation, must suffer, must die, must rise again, must ascend, must send the Spirit, must sit at the right hand of God and must come again at the last day—mine eyes have seen Thy salvation! So it is with the person who prays according to the will of God—he already has the petitions which he has asked of his God. The complete answer is so certain that he already possesses that for which he asked. This is true prayer!

**Praying for one another**—John now touches upon quite a different subject, even though it is connected to the foregoing. The believers are to pray one for another. They are also to pray for those who are straying. Let them then also know that their prayers will be of great effect. He speaks then of a brother who is sinning, but his sins are not unto death.

Two questions immediately arise: Are not all sins unto death? and, Can we make a distinction among sins and say that one is worse than the other? John definitely makes such a distinction—even though it seems to be dangerous. The church has attempted to do this at various times and paid dearly for it. However, John here makes a distinction between the sins for which there is forgiveness and those for which there is no forgiveness! Although the "least" sin is worthy of death, there is forgiveness of sins through the blood of Jesus Christ. Even though all unrighteousness is sin—there is a sin *not* unto death. When a fellow believer falls into sin you are to pray for him, says John. You can pray confidently because this prayer is according to His will.

There is also a sin unto death, i.e., the unpardonable sin. John does not tell his readers to pray for those who have committed this sin. Why not? Because they will then not pray according to His will. In fact, they will know that this prayer will not be heard. Should they pray for such they must not complain about "unanswered prayer," but they must realize that they have prayed amiss.

As mentioned above, the sin unto death is the unpardonable sin to which Jesus also refers in Matthew 12:32. He speaks of it as the sin against the Spirit. As the context shows in Matthew 12, it is the sin of ascribing the work of God to the devil. For such a sin there is no forgiveness, i.e., becomes the sin unto death, because the Spirit, Who alone can lead to penitence, leaves.

**The believer "sinneth not"**—The true believer does not continue in sin. This was made clear by the Apostle when he had used the words "whosoever is begotten of God sinneth not" in previous chapters of this same epistle.

The believer has not attained to perfection, but he does not remain in his sins even though he may fall into them. He cannot live the life of sin. The one who is born of God "keepeth himself—he cares for his own spiritual life. He is concerned about his spiritual welfare. He hates sin and flees from it. Therefore the evil one doesn't touch him." By this the writer doesn't mean to teach us that the evil one has no influence upon the believer in any way, but that the evil one is not able to penetrate his spiritual armor.

**Either of God or of the devil**—We know, says John, that we are of God. This is the one thing which he impresses upon his readers throughout this book. We have that knowledge, that assurance, that certainty. This fact must be clear in their hearts and minds and may never be doubted. How can they have that assurance? Just about every paragraph of this epistle has been directed toward this subject. They have the true faith; they have received the Spirit of God; they have been regenerated; they love the brethren. All these things give them the assurance that they are of God—are His children.

On the other hand, the whole world lies in the evil one! All those who are not of God are in the evil one! Is this true? Is there not a class of men who are neither in God nor in the evil one? That is often our view of humanity. So many seem to be in somewhat of a neutral state. John, the Apostle of love, is again very sharp in his distinctions. What is not of God is of the devil! The Scriptures do not recognize social, economic or racial distinctions—only belief and unbelief.

"And we know that the Son of God is come." He has emphasized throughout this epistle that the Son of God was Jesus. Only when they so confess Jesus will they know that the Son of God has really come. In His coming all the questions of faith have been answered. Without the coming of the Son of

God much of the Old Testament would be conundrum — with His coming everything falls into place. He is confident that his readers know that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.

The coming of Christ has given understanding to His people. They have received insight into the truth. He has come to give true knowledge. He has given them the understanding so that they might recognize Him as the truth. Circular reasoning? Without a doubt; but the Bible engages in this so often! We also know that the Bible is true. How? Because the Bible tells us! The understanding which His people have received of Him does not only consist of an enlightened intellect, but is also found in a new fellowship. "We are in Him that is true," Jesus Christ is the truth and the way and the life. All our life and all our welfare is bound up in Jesus Christ.

**Jesus Christ is true God** — Against the most diabolical heresy of the day John has taught his readers that Jesus was indeed the Christ, the Son of God. Now he makes it crystal clear what this means. *It means that Jesus Christ is the true God!* As the Son He is not a lesser being — He is God Himself. This is as clear a statement of the deity of Jesus Christ as is found in all the Scriptures. How could men deny His deity in the early church if they took the Scriptures seriously? If Jesus is the true God, it can also be said that He is eternal life — and not only that He gives eternal life. This is the conclusion of the whole matter — the Jesus Whom he has proclaimed throughout this epistle is his Lord and his God!

The last sentence of the epistle seems almost out of place. Yet, it summarizes all of his warnings. He once more calls them "little children" as evidence of

his love for them. He wrote because he loved them, He warned them because he loved them. He spoke sharply at times because he loved them. It is true that his readers lived in a world full of idolatry, but that does not seem to be the reason for his last statement in this book. Everything that detracts from Jesus Christ is idolatry! Anything to which they give their love or allegiance outside of Jesus Christ, is idolatry. They are to guard themselves against this idolatry. There is to be complete allegiance and surrender to Jesus Christ! He alone is worthy of it!

So ends this beautiful little book. It is a book to which believers have turned again and again for assurance of faith. It never disappoints.

**Questions for discussion:**

1. What is necessary for the assurance of faith besides the knowledge of salvation?
2. What is to determine the content of our prayers? Do you think many prayers do not acknowledge this standard? Is there such a thing as "unanswered prayer"? Explain.
3. Do we pray enough for those who are sinning? Often we only condemn or expect the elders of the church to do something about it. What does Article 86 of the Church Order have to say about the fellow believer's duty on this score?
4. Should we make distinctions among sins committed? Have we done so? What is your view of dividing sins into mortal and venial?
5. We usually do not consider circular reasoning to be acceptable. Is the Bible logical? Do we use circular reasoning in any other sphere?

Book House, 408 pages, 1977, paperback edition, \$5.95.

**REVELATION** (an exposition of the first 11 chapters, Geneva series of commentaries), 518 pages, by James B. Ramsey. The Banner of Truth Trust, P. O. Box 621, Carlisle, Pa. 17013, \$10.95.

**JAMES**, by Robert Johnstone (Geneva series of Commentaries). The Banner of Truth, 464 pages, \$8.95.

**WHO'S WHO IN CHURCH HISTORY**, by Wm. P. Barker. Baker Book House, 319 pages, \$2.95.

**THE RELIGION OF PRESIDENT CARTER**, by Nels C. Nielsen Jr. Thomas Nelson Inc., Nashville and New York, 162 pages, \$2.95.

**ELECTION (Love Before Time)**, by Kenneth D. Johns. Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., P. O. Box 185, Nutley, N. J. 07110, 93 pages, \$2.50.

**THE GAY CHURCH**, by Ronald M. Enroth and Gerald E. Jamison. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Mich., 144 pages, \$4.95.

**WHEN I SURVEY** — (a Lenten Anthology) by Herman Hoeksema. Re-

formed Free Publishing Association, distributed by Kregel Publications, Grand Rapids, Mich., 538 pages, \$9.95.

**EERDMANS' HANDBOOK TO THE HISTORY OF CHRISTIANITY**, Tim Dowley, Organizing Editor. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 656 pages, \$19.95.

**MAN OF GENEVA** (The Story of John Calvin), by Elsie M. Johnson. The Banner of Truth Trust, 129 pages, \$2.80.

**PROMISE AND DELIVERANCE STUDY GUIDE**, Volume I, by Gordon J. Spykman, Paideia Press, St. Catherine's Press, Ontario, Canada, 93 pages, \$2.50.

**THE EVANGELICALS** (What They Believe, Who They Are, Where They Are Changing). Revised Edition. Edited by David F. Wells and John D. Woodbridge. Baker Book House, 325 pages, \$4.95.

**THE EVANGELICAL RENAISSANCE**, by Donald G. Bloesch. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 165 pages, \$2.95.

**A BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE ON THE RACE PROBLEM**, by Thomas O. Figart. Baker Book House, 185 pages, \$3.95.



(Books received from the publishers for mention and/or review)

**UNDERSTANDING CHRISTIAN MISSIONS**, by J. Herbert Kane; Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Mich., 452 pages, \$9.95.

**THE DOCTRINE OF GOD**, by Herman Bavinck. Translated, Edited, and Outlined by Wm. Hendriksen. Baker

NEW TESTAMENT ESSAYS, by Vincent Taylor. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 139 pages, \$2.95.

SELECTED SHORTER WRITINGS OF BENJAMIN WARFIELD — II. Edited by John E. Meeter. Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., \$8.95.

SCIENCE TEACHING — A CHRISTIAN APPROACH, by Robert J. Ream. Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 130 pages, \$2.50.

THE JUSTIFICATION OF KNOWLEDGE, by Robert L. Reymond. Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 168 pages, \$4.50.

PROMISE AND DELIVERANCE, S. G. De Graaf. Vol. I, "From Creation to the Conquest of Canaan." Paideia Press, 423 pp., 1977. Reviewed by Rev. Henry Vanden Heuvel, Sioux Center, Iowa.

This book is one of the most influential and important books on the subject of Biblical Theology. It is a translation from the Dutch of the two volume work called *Verbondsgeschiedenis* "the history of the Covenant," by S. G. De Graaf, a minister in Amsterdam who lived from 1889-1955. The original work appeared in two volumes, one for each Testament. The translation into English by Dr. H. Evan Runner, will appear in four volumes.

Rev. De Graaf wrote this book as a guide for Sunday School teachers to help them teach the Bible stories to their children. It is geared to make the Bible clear in its over-all message. And it is intended to help those of every age to understand what God had in mind with the message of Scripture.

There are three things that De Graaf seeks to accomplish in telling these stories of Scripture. The first is to emphasize that the Bible is nothing more or less than the self-revelation of God. If we keep this in mind, he says, we will not fall into the trap of moralism in reading the stories of Scripture. Moralism, says De Graaf, is looking at the stories in the Bible as if their purpose is to tell us how we are to live: that if we do good, we will be rewarded, and if we are bad, we will be punished. Moralism looks at Scripture as primarily the story of persons, not as the revelation of God. De Graaf illustrates this in the life of Joseph. If we look at the history of Joseph in Scripture as the revelation of Joseph's faith, Joseph's trust, Joseph's obedience, we will miss the great purpose for this revelation in Scripture. That purpose is that God sovereignly brought all these things to pass in order to preserve the life of the people of Israel for the coming of Jesus Christ. But moralism cuts the heart out of Scripture when it destroys the message of the Bible.

The second thing that is emphasized in De Graaf's book is that God reveals

Himself in the Mediator Jesus Christ. The unity of the Bible is then seen because both the Old and New Testaments speak of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Old Testament speaks of the Christ who is to be born, and the New Testament of course speaks of the Christ who has come. But unless one sees Jesus Christ as the central figure in the entire Scripture, he will fail to understand its message. Thus every individual in Old Testament Scripture must be seen from the point of view of Christ, either as a type of Christ, or as a type of the great enemy of Christ. De Graaf brings this out in reviewing the life of Abraham. Jesus said, "Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it and was glad" (John 8:56). This is perhaps most beautifully shown in De Graaf's treatment of Genesis 22, the offering up of Isaac by Abraham. He writes, "The truth of the matter is that God was making an even greater sacrifice than Abraham: He was sacrificing the child He loved, the child to whom He had bound Himself through the promise. If God was willing to make such a sacrifice, it had to be because it was the only way for Him to reveal His love and favor to the fullest extent possible. If so, then Abraham could sacrifice too. Abraham was indeed correct in thinking that if Isaac was to be offered up, it was really God who was doing the sacrificing. God was sacrificing more than any human being ever could. Later on, God Himself offered the greatest sacrifice that could possibly be made when He sacrificed His own Son. He gave up the Lord Jesus Christ completely for us" (p. 139).

The third main emphasis is on the covenant. De Graaf insists that the covenant is the only way in which God comes to His people. And therefore all of the stories in Scripture really are to be seen in terms of the covenant. It is not just the covenant of grace, or the covenant of works that is seen in the Scriptures. These various covenants that we observe are representations of the covenantal relationship of God to His people. We ought not to think of the covenant only with Noah, or only with Abraham. Rather we must see that God comes into relationship with His people in a covenantal way. God pledges Himself to His people in Jesus Christ. And indeed, He pledges Himself to all creation in Jesus Christ. He becomes the God of His people when He comes to Adam, to Noah, to Abraham.

The book *Promise and Deliverance* is an important help to the understanding of Scripture. The translation is beautifully done by Dr. H. Evan Runner, professor of Philosophy at Calvin College, and his wife. It is published by Paideia Press, a new publisher from St. Catharines, Ontario. Every minister of the Word ought to use this book. Every Sunday School teacher ought to have it. Every parent who tells the Bible stories to his children should use it. The way that Rev. De Graaf tells the

story of Joseph restoring unity in the family of Jacob when he made himself known to his brothers is worth the price of the book itself. He speaks of the reconciliation on the basis of sacrifice — of Joseph, of Jacob, and of Judah and his brothers. And in each case, he shows how this sacrifice is typical of that of God in Jesus Christ, in restoring our unity with God. We look forward to future volumes in the translation of this crucial book.

IN SEARCH OF NOAH'S ARK, by Dave Balsiger and Charles E. Sellier, Jr. Sun Classic Books, 11071 Massachusetts Ave., Los Angeles, Calif. 90025. 1976, 218 pages, \$1.95. Reviewed by Rev. Fred Van Houten, Sully, Iowa.

The subtitle of this book is "The Greatest Discovery of Our Time." The concluding sentence of the book proper is "In the final analysis, space technology has brought to a level of scientific confirmation the existence of Noah's Ark" (p. 201). However, in all the pages between these two declarations there is really no factual evidence that the Ark is resting on Mt. Ararat.

There are some good features of this publication. The authors evidently have a high view of Scripture. They associate themselves with John C. Whitcomb, Henry Morris, and John Warwick Montgomery by quoting them and their writings. A better section of the book is the earlier part in which they make a strong case, Scripturally and scientifically, for a universal flood.

Considerable space is devoted to various details about living conditions in the ark, both for the eight people and the animals, as well as the shape, seaworthiness, wood, and durability of the ark. Despite the laudable effort to meet the problems of man's inquiring mind, there remain real problems if we try to explain everything about life in the ark. We must not forget the miraculous.

In my estimation, the book has some serious weaknesses. As is well known, a movie is made from it: This may explain some matters, but does not enhance its credibility. It is asserted that "in all probability" Noah had many children before he was 500 years old, after which the three named sons were born (p. 134). The authors claim that scientists have tried to destroy the evidence on Mt. Ararat. They leave the impression that difficulties in discovering the great ship are well nigh insurmountable. In spite of the extremely high altitude, the perennial glaciers, and the ice of centuries, there is description of moss on the wood, and a "soggy mass" believed to be timbers of the ark.

These features of the book weaken its credibility. Again and again the reader asks where the evidence is for the fantastic claims. It is all epitomized in a sentence written by Eryl Cummings about a photo taken in 1966, "While I was looking at these slides, I discovered in one of them an object which looked

like it possibly could be the ark" (p. 164). When everything is said, this is about all that can be said.

**SURVEY OF THE BIBLE** (Fourth Revised Edition), by Dr. William Hendriksen. Published by Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Mich. Reviewed by K. Gunnink, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

I was personally delighted to have a copy of this new edition. I remember the old edition fondly because we students studied it thoroughly under Dr. Hendriksen's professorship at R.B.I. As I paged through the new edition—sure enough—there were those intriguing chronological charts we memorized years ago with the special mnemonic devices to make them easier to remember.

As to contents, where shall I begin or end. There are facts about the Bible, how the Bible should be studied and interpreted (most helpful), a survey of sacred history, survey of Bible books all tied together in a major theme: the coming of Christ into the world and His great redemptive acts. The Bible history reads like an interesting story book packed with significant facts, data, and rare spiritual insights that make the data come alive with meaning. Difficult questions regarding chronological events are carefully discussed, and the conservative view of Scripture upheld. Scholarly research is everywhere evident.

The new edition is made especially attractive with illustrations. The larger print makes for easier reading. Latest conclusions of Biblical scholarship are inserted.

Hendriksen's Bible Survey has served well since the first edition was published. The new edition will serve even better all those seeking a better understanding of the Bible as a whole. It will be especially helpful for Bible students, Sunday School teachers, and Christian workers.

**THE NEW INTERNATIONAL DICTIONARY OF NEW TESTAMENT THEOLOGY**, Volume 2, edited by Colin Brown, Zondervan, 1977, 1023 pp., \$27.95. Reviewed by Rev. Henry J. Boekhoven, Pastor of the First Christian Reformed Church of Kalamazoo, Mich.

The Zondervan Publishing House is engaged in presenting the Christian reader with first class material, among which the Dictionary of New Testament Theology (DNNT) takes top honors. The production of this originally German work in the English language is done in conjunction with the Paternoster Press in the United Kingdom. The DNNT is a vast undertaking for which the Zondervan House is to be complimented. Volume 1 appeared last year (see my Book review in *THE OUTLOOK* of December 1976), the 2nd Volume came off the presses recently, and Volume 3 which will complete the DNNT, is scheduled to be published next year.

Our dictionary under review is not intended to be used by only theologians. Its content is arranged in such a way that the English reader can benefit from it greatly. The entries are listed in English—not Greek as one might expect—and 86 pages of indexes make all the data stored in the DNNT readily accessible. Volume 2 is written by 81 contributors. Although some of them are from the English speaking world, most of them are German scholars. The General Editor is residing in Great Britain.

Generally all articles deal with information on the usage of words and concepts in classical Greek, in the Old Testament Greek translation, known as the Septuagint, in the Dead Sea Scrolls and intertestamentary period, and—of course—in the New Testament. Often the New Testament development is followed through the Gospels, the Pauline letters and the Pastoral letters. At times information from rabbinic literature is added.

The DNNT seems more conservative than Gerhard Kittel's Theological Dictionary of the New Testament which work is to consist of 10 large volumes. Begun in 1933 it is to be completed soon. The German language set will consist of nearly 10,000 large pages. The DNNT will be less than 3,000 pages, and hence it is much more manageable. The editor and contributors have limited themselves in such a way that most information is readily available for private study and sermon preparation. I have used Volume 1 extensively over the past year and compared its content often with Kittel's larger dictionary. Although I enjoyed using both works side by side, I had to come to the conclusion that I favored the DNNT. The compactness of this work is a definite "plus," especially when one learns that limitedness was acquired without sacrificing important detail.

I read through a goodly number of articles of Volume 2. In the entry on Jerusalem I noticed that the explanation of the name of the city—Foundation of Salem—was given in the light of "recent" discoveries. It makes one wonder what is meant by "recent," since the El-Amarna tablets of 1887 are responsible for this interpretation of the name. Also, in the article on the Lord's Supper interesting light is thrown on Jesus' words, "This is My body." Incidentally, I saw two typographical errors.

One may not agree with everything written in the DNNT, but that does not detract from the fact that this scholarly work will be appreciated for years to come by many who study their Bible seriously. The DNNT is a storehouse full of precious information; anyone who is willing to digest its content will greatly enhance his understanding of God's Word.

**MILLENNIAL STUDIES. A Search for Truth**, by George L. Murray. Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, 207 pages, paperback, \$2.95. Reviewed by the Rev. Peter De Boer, retired CRC minister, Edgerton, Minnesota.

Regarding the author the cover states, "Widely acknowledged as a scholar of unusual ability, George L. Murray was born in Scotland, emigrated to Canada after World War I, and prepared for the ministry at Presbyterian College, Montreal. He held pastorates in the United Presbyterian Church in the Boston area and taught History of Doctrine at Gordon College until his death."

The influence of Darby and of Scofield upon much of American fundamentalism has been very great. A pre-millennial view of eschatology runs rampant in our country. In extreme cases one's adherence to pre-millennialism has become the touchstone of orthodoxy. Over against this tide of pre-millennialism a book such as this fills a need. Baker's have done well to bring out a new printing, the fifth since the book was first published in 1948.

The author has in mind the Christian reader whose outlook has been formed by the influence of dispensationalism and pre-millennialism. Realizing how difficult it is to shed pre-conceived notions, the writer carefully approaches the subject, trying to show that the dispensational view conflicts with Scripture, and that not the pre- but the a-millennial view is the one of the Bible. I read the book with profit, found it enlightening and refreshing.

Murray shows himself a careful student of Scripture, comparing Scripture with Scripture. He expositions the Word, and lets the Word speak. His exegesis generally is excellent. However, I was not wholly satisfied with his treatment of the difficult chapter of Matthew 24, as it occurs in chapter 9.

Heartily recommended. Especially for those that may have doubts about the a-millennial position. Easily read.

**A WOMAN'S WORTH AND WORK**, by Karen Helder De Vos. Baker Book House, 101 pp. Reviewed by Laurie Vanden Heuvel, Chino, California.

This is a small volume of one hundred pages divided into three chapters, but it represents a trend of thought which in some ways will enrich the life of the church, but in other ways will threaten her unity in the years which lie immediately ahead.

The first chapter is entitled, "What Do Feminists Want?" In this chapter Mrs. De Vos delineates nine stereotypes of woman's character and capabilities that the current women's liberation force is trying to abolish. In her own words, Mrs. De Vos' purpose is to "sort out main issues from peripheral ones" in the movement and "suggest to what extent a Christian can or should, be accepting and working for the goals of the movement." We laud her purpose for there

have clearly been injustices committed against women and misunderstandings of her role in society.

There are however, serious problems with Mrs. De Vos' solutions to those injustices and misunderstandings. In chapter two she examines the Biblical teaching regarding the roles of male and female in creation—their separate functions and also their relationship to each other. It is impossible in this brief review, to examine each point the author makes. But it may be stated that there is *one main problem* which surfaces with almost every point she makes. The author consistently identifies "inferior" with "subordinate" as it applies to a woman's role in society. She goes to great lengths to establish the fact that Genesis does not portray woman as "inferior" to man. But with this the church has agreed for centuries. It is clear to everyone that female mental prowess does not have to stand in the shadow of male capabilities. The difference between male and female as God made them and spelled out their roles, was not in their intrinsic *abilities*, but in their *office*. Man was to be the *head* and woman was to be the *helper*, particularly in the home and in the church, as the New Testament later develops in detail. When one confuses the issue by identifying "inferior" with "subordinate" as Mrs. De Vos has done, it makes the teaching of the church through the centuries regarding women appear most unfair and unworkable in today's society, when actually that is not the case at all. Mrs. De Vos' identification of these different ideas colors everything else she says in the book and forces her into conclusions which historic Christianity can never accept, particularly as they apply to office in the church and a woman's role in the home.

Mrs. De Vos appeals to the Scriptures in defense of her arguments. However, in doing so, she often employs a "strained" if not actually a "faulty" exegesis. Specific teaching like I Timothy 2:14 which was clearly written on the matter of "subordination" rooted in the "creation order" and perpetuated in the "fall," she will not deal with because

"we do not understand it in its entirety" (p. 53). It is hard to understand this passage *only* if one *rejects* the basic premise of "subordination" on which it was written.

Her identification of "inferior" with "subordinate" also colors her interpretation of Jesus' dealings with women. She draws conclusions which the gospel writers never intended should be drawn. New Testament injunctions regarding woman's position she dismisses as culturally conditioned and this of course colors her interpretation of the role of women in the *church*. She opposes any distinction between men and women as it applies to their respective roles in the *offices* (minister, elder and deacon) of the church.

In her treatment of *careers* for married women and mothers, Mrs. De Vos gives a good analysis of domestic changes in today's world which have given women more *time* in which to develop their talents. She draws on several portions of Scripture which do clearly support her points. She goes *beyond* Scripture however, 1) when she attempts to show that women were not necessarily intended to be homemakers. 2) When she attempts to show that a mother's love and training can be adequately substituted in a good day care center. 3) When she attempts to show that the Bible teaches no physical differences of strength or weakness between male and female. The Bible clearly teaches that, 1) wives should be "keepers at home"; 2) Wives should (with their husbands) "train up a child in the way he should go"; 3) Wives are the "weaker vessel" (I Peter 3:7), leaving it to the doctors of medicine and psychiatry to define with more precision what that should mean. If a woman can fulfill these domestic and spiritual Biblical imperatives and still have time left over, she has the Biblical "green light" to develop whatever other talents lie latent within her.

In the third chapter, Mrs. De Vos answers the women's liberation movement very Biblically on the matters of abortion and the permanency of marriage. She urges all Christian women to make extended use of the great variety

of gifts which God has given them—a challenge which must not go unheeded.

**GOD'S COVENANT**, by C. K. Campbell. Presbyterian and Reformed Pub. Co., Nutley, N.J., 1974. 73 pp., paper, \$1.50. Reviewed by Paul E. Bakker of Rock Valley, Iowa.

According to the author this little book was written "to call attention to the basic significance of the concept of covenant," a word that occurs over 300 times in the Bible.

Campbell clearly shows that God's redemptive work for His people and His dealings with them are of a covenantal nature. He shows how that in the very beginning God dealt with Adam covenantally in what he has chosen to call the "Covenant of Life" (a title that he prefers to the "Covenant of Works," as it is sometimes called). He then deals with "The Messianic Covenant," the covenant made with Jesus Christ in order to undo consequences of Adam's disobedience of the covenant. Chapters four and five, the major part of the book, deal with "The Covenant of Redemption in Preparation" and "The Covenant of Redemption in Fulfillment." These show the way in which man may return to covenant fellowship with God. That way is by faith in Christ who kept the covenant for us.

In contrast to dispensationalism the author shows that there is essentially one Covenant of Grace, or Covenant of Redemption as he prefers to call it, which is in effect in both Old and New Testaments. He points out that while the new is superior to the old, yet it is essentially one with the old.

Campbell gives us much good Biblical instruction in this brief, yet comprehensive, survey of the Biblical teaching concerning the covenant. He shows that "it is the covenant which brings God to us, or rather, brings us to God and maintains our knowledge of and fellowship with Him." A good contribution to an important subject.



THE OUTLOOK is indebted to Rev. Jerome M. Julien, pastor of the First Christian Reformed Church of Pella, Iowa, for having provided this Index to the contents of the issue of 1977.

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by REV. JEROME JULIEN

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