

# The Outlook

**MARRIAGE IN THE SCRIPTURAL CONTEXT  
TRANSCENDENTAL MEDITATION  
THE BIBLE'S USE AND AUTHORITY**



**JULY - 1978**

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

# Marriage in the Scriptural Context

JOHN H. PIERSMA

There are books (often small in size) which over the years become very precious for a preacher. One of these for me is B. Holwerda's *The Significance of Covenant and Church for Marriage, Family and Youth* (De Betekenis van Verbond en Kerk voor Huwelijk, Gezin en Jeugd, 1958) — a collection of speeches and articles spoken and published by the author during his brief life. Prof. Holwerda was one of the ministers who left the Reformed Churches (Gereformeerd) in the Netherlands with Dr. Schilder. He taught Old Testament in the Theological School of the Liberated Churches during the last period of his life. Before that he was recognized not only as an unusually gifted scholar (Prof. C. Veenhof told me last year that if B. Holwerda had lived to a full complement of years he would have produced even more than Schilder!), but as an eloquent and even more biblical preacher.

I hope to make the substance of some parts of this book available over the next months to OUTLOOK readers. I think that Holwerda has much to say to us in the struggles now agonizing our Reformed circles.

These articles will not be mere translation. We assume complete responsibility for their content. But we want everyone to know that our source is as indicated.

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There is a series of three articles in this book on the subject of marriage in terms of certain biblical illustrations and situations. The relevance of the subject cannot be questioned! These biblical illustrations are used to show that Christian marriage is not only described and regulated in Scripture, but also made possible by our gracious redemption in Christ.

## **The Godly Example of Christian Parents is Great . . . but Not Enough!**

Many among us are the beneficiaries of the godly example of parents who demonstrated in word and deed the love and loyalty of a truly Christian marriage. This, says Holwerda, is of inestimable importance and an occasion for real gratitude to God. But it is not enough.

Why not? For two reasons: first, the Bible, not parents, is the only norm for marriage, and, second, the times in which we live are quite different from those of our parents. The first reason is obviously true (for us, at least!). The second is not that obvious.

Differences between one age and another are real but not absolute. Marriage was not without strain and temptation "way back there" when the older generation lived and worked. But circumstances today are both more intense and more complicated. Things that used to be regarded as utterly shameful are now easily accepted: divorce, birth control, extra-marital parentage, "the affair," even homosexuality. Marriage for Christians can hardly escape unusual pressures under such conditions.

## **The Biblical Message: God Saves!**

The Bible gives us the authoritative revelation of God as the God of our salvation (Ps. 68:20; Is. 12:2). With the Psalmist we cry, "Who can utter the mighty acts of the Lord?" (Ps. 106:2a). The historical position of Israel, for example, is often one of deepest darkness and utter hopelessness. But then one sees the irresistible penetration of the light of Yaweh's salvation. Th faithful pray that God may rend the heavens (Is. 64:1). That prayer is answered. Of such great stories the Bible is full.

And when the Bible so speaks it is not simply to commemorate but to repeat a divine *promise*. Such accounts are not designed to make one say, "That is something which once happened, in which we are somewhat interested, but from which we can really learn nothing of importance for us today." If the Bible spoke only of past things, its illustrations could only depress us. We all know, however, that the Bible is the Word of God for us who live *today* as well as it was His Word for them who lived then. He does not merely give us an account of a salvation and redemption given to others in previous generations. He promises us the same help for today.

When God appears to Moses He identifies Himself repeatedly as "the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob" (Ex. 3:6, 15). This is not said to make Moses jealous by reminding him of what God had been for others. By that expression God intended to encourage Moses, to assure him that He was still the same, and that He would help Moses and the people of Israel as surely and wonderfully as He had helped their fathers.

## **The Promise Is Never Without Demand**

Exodus 3 is a chapter which tells of the meeting between Yahweh and Moses at the burning-but-not-consumed bush. God speaks to Moses there about the deliverance of His people out of the land of Egypt. This is a deliverance that involves many things (we are saved to the uttermost!). It involves also the salvation of marriage, a deliverance from the problems and pain which Egypt had inflicted upon God's married children.

The salvation of marriage is a promise of God to His children today, a promise which carries with it the other feature of covenantal religion: God's holy demands. Grace in Scripture never goes without God's calling. In all covenants there are contained two parts.

That is what we need in marriages as well as everywhere else: the promise and the law of God, of

Yahweh, our Lord (Ex. 3:14, 15). The example of godly parents can be of some comfort for me, indeed. But nothing can comfort so much as the Word of the Heavenly Father, and nothing can bind me to a Christian husband or wife as firmly as the law of thankfulness which Christ lays upon me as an easy yoke and a light burden.

There are many illustrations in Scripture which shed light upon the nature of Christian marriage. We could mention the marriage of Adam and Eve and the evil commingling of "the sons of God" and "the daughters of men" (Gen. 6). And we could go on to speak of Abraham and Sarah, of Isaac and Rebecca, of Jacob with Leah and Rachel, of Esau, whose wives were a grief for his parents, of Samson and Delilah, and the affair of David with Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah the Hittite. We will limit ourselves, however, to three biblical illustrations: The marriage of Amram and Jochebed, parents of Moses, the marriage of Elimelech and Naomi, and the miracle of our Lord at the wedding-feast in Cana. This article deals only with the first of these.

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### I. MARRIAGE AND THE OPPRESSION OF EGYPT AS SEEN IN THE LIFE OF MOSES' PARENTS, (Exodus 1, 2).

It often goes unnoticed that Amram and Jochebed, Moses' parents, are given a place in the list of the "heroes of faith" in Hebrews 11. Almost hidden is the remark that Moses after his birth "was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment" (vs. 23). Also this verse is introduced with the stereotype: "By faith. . ."

Moses' parents were certainly not among the most famous in the land. They belonged to that group called in Abraham's Kuyper's day *kleine luyden* ("little people"). Their life was a life occupied with common, ordinary things. Fame was never their portion: their great son soon pushed them into the shadows of obscurity. We know little more about them than that they were the parents of Moses, Aaron and Miriam, and that they loved their children.

We are comfortable with them. They don't make us uneasy by their great accomplishment and high standing.

#### What was THE Great Factor in Their Marriage?

The great factor in the marriage of Moses' parents was faith.

That is why they were included not only in Hebrews 11 as part of that cloud of witnesses who surround us as believers. This is not due to the great fame of their son, whose greatness would have brought distinction to any parents. It is due rather to that which they did out of faith, especially in their marriage.

Their example becomes at this point very meaningful for us. These simple people distinguished

# 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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themselves only by their faith, a faith which was the principle support in their marriage. That means for us that God will add our names to that sacred register of Hebrews 11, so that we may come to be listed alongside Abraham and Moses, *if our marriage is truly a matter of faith!* Our significance before God consists not in outward fame or recognition: it is rather in belonging to the congregation of true Christian believers, being living members of the church, in whose marriages faith is *the great* factor.

That was the only distinction found in Amram and Jochebed, and that was enough to establish them among God's great heroes of faith. For that reason it is worthwhile to inquire as to how Moses' parents demonstrated their faith as believing parents.

### **The Political Situation at the Time of Their Marriage**

The principal features of the history leading up to the birth of Moses are familiar. Jacob with his family of seventy souls emigrated to Egypt during the time of unbearable famine. There was, thanks to the wise and blessed administration of Joseph, plenty to eat in Egypt. And the Egyptians, beneficiaries of the wisdom, skill and blessing of Joseph the Hebrew, welcomed his family with open arms.

In course of time, however, there was a radical turnabout. Joseph died. A new king arose who "knew not Joseph." This new king felt no moral obligation to treat Joseph's brothers and sisters kindly.

This was perhaps due to a change in political climate in Egypt. When Israel came to Egypt the Hyksos kings were in control. Being themselves of Semitic origin, it is easy to see that they could comfortably accommodate the presence of another Semitic group in their realm, especially since it was very small. In course of time this group lost its hold on the throne, and a non-Semitic, Egyptian Pharaoh came to power. Whether this new regime hated the Hebrews because of their natural association with the previous rulers, or simply feared the growing menace of a foreign tribe within its borders, we don't know. But the political situation changed drastically, and the Hebrews were its victims.

### **Marital Obedience Occasions Affliction!**

Especially in such circumstances the rapid numerical growth of the Israelites spelled trouble. If they had remained an unimpressive tribe the Egyptian domestic political policies could have ignored them. But children came rapidly to the Israelites, in God's favor, resulting in an unusually rapid population increase. It is understandable that the Egyptians would find this worrisome, especially since they had just been ruled by foreigners.

The Bible tells us that the hardship inflicted by the Egyptians was occasioned by the steep rise in the Hebrew birthrate, which is to say, the Israelites married according to the commandment of the Lord, and in that calling they obeyed His will. Including the command already given to Adam in the beginning, "be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth."

This raises a point which deserves some attention, especially in this day and age. *Then* the growth of the church was of such a nature that the enemy became very concerned. *Today* there is often fear in church circles that the growth of the church does not even keep pace with a diminished general population growth!

### **Dictatorial Tactics**

It was not only the political climate which changed in Egypt, and which deserves our attention. Israel's altered *social position* is equally noteworthy.

You know that the Hebrews practised animal husbandry during their earlier years in Egypt. They lived in relative isolation in Goshen, enjoying a high degree of freedom. To this the new Pharaoh made an end. He saw the Israelites as a growing threat to the safety of his realm, and that made him consider measures to off-set this danger. The best way was genocide, the elimination of the Israelitish people from the face of the earth. On the other hand, however, as long as they were around he might as well profit from their presence as much as possible.

He hit upon a way to combine these aims. Both were taken up into his new policy for a stronger Egypt. He set out to protect his country by building a ring of fortresses, establishing Egypt as a military power with which all would have to reckon. At the same time he increased domestic production by increasing the number of irrigation centers so that the number of productive acres in the Nile valley was vastly multiplied. He then turned Israel into slave labor forced to build and man these military bulwarks and irrigation operations.

Pharaoh's brilliant but cruel policy was implemented with rigor, even though it implied the loss of many Israelites by death. It is estimated that the death rate among those in the ranks of slave labor was at least ten percent per year. Israel's predicament seemed hopeless. Their freedom was lost and the forced labor was so cruel that any man must expect that within a few years he would be crippled, or burned out . . . or dead.

### **Slaughter of the Innocents**

Most frightening, however, was the lot of the child in Israel. Pharaoh noticed that the mere oppression did not have the desired effect, and so he issued, first secretly and then publicly, the command to kill all boy babies. And at the same time he intensified the rigors of slave labor. In this way he expected to decimate the older generation and to cut off the increase of Hebrew population by new births.

It is important, I think, if we are to see the significance of all this to take note of the fact that in Revelation 11 the city in which the witnesses (the church) are slaughtered is called *Sodom and Egypt*. That means that the character of the world which was Egypt never changes. In principle the world always hates the children of the church, and will seek to destroy them.

There is evidence of this in our time which it is no longer fashionable to mention. I refer to the rise of Marxism and Communism on both sides of the famous "curtains." Who doesn't know that the youth of the church in a Marxist state are relentlessly diverted from continuing in the steps of the faithful? Moscow and Peking are not healthy places for a vocal Christian witness!

It is important that our spiritual leadership instruct our marriageable youth not only with respect to the physical and personal and psychological aspects of wedded life, but also with respect to its spiritual realities. If we marry "in the Lord" and subject our married life to Christ's will we must be aware of the possibility that the reproach of Christ may have to be suffered. "Egypt" has always sought to deprive believing parents of their freedom and Covenant children of their spiritual inheritance. This may come by increased state intrusion into that which properly belongs to parents. Governments rarely diminish their hold on anything that once falls prey to the illusion that its support is desirable or "free."

#### The Necessity of Faith

"Egypt" may never discourage us to the point that we withdraw from our Christian calling, not even with respect to marriage. But its ever-threatening presence does accentuate the absolute necessity of marrying in the faith. And that faith must be an *eschatological* faith, the kind that looks for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Only the truth that He is coming to bring redemption and victory can give us the courage to accept the task of Christian marriage and the peace of mind needed whenever we consider the dire possibilities that hang over our children's heads.

That is beautifully illustrated in what the Bible tells us about Amram and Jochebed. How did they act in a time of such danger?

We noted that Hebrews 11 says that they in their marriage lived *by faith*. But what was the *content* of that faith? How did it come to expression? And how could that faith survive the testings which must have been so frightening?

#### The Perspective of Faith

It is our conviction that it was true faith that moved Amram and Jochebed as they made plans to marry. Apparently the edict that all male babies should be killed was not yet in effect when they married. And yet it took a great deal of courage and a strong faith for them to marry. Amram was going to be impressed into the slave labor force. And he knew what that meant: he would be a slave and as such brutalized. How long would he be able to endure such suffering? How long could their marriage last under such circumstances? Amram married knowing full well that he would not be handled preferentially. His back would be within reach of the Egyptian lash. Jochebed, the bride, had to be aware of the strong possibility that she would soon be widowed.

In such times it takes strength of resolution to marry. With mere romantic sentimentality one would never make it. The only way to achieve such strength was by faith. Faith in the Messiah who would come. Faith that believed without wavering in the God of the fathers who would sustain in suffering and deliver from oppression. Surely Amram and Jochebed had no other perspective than that which begins with Genesis 3:15 and ends in the coming Messiah.

This perspective is good enough for any marriage. Amram and Jochebed did not know Romans 8 as we have it, but the heart of its assurance was already theirs: Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? In all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. They knew that tribulation could never isolate them from God, and that it could not really threaten their salvation.

So they could and did marry and have children. When Miriam and Aaron were born they enjoyed the help of the faithful midwives who refused to carry out Pharaoh's terrible decree. But when Moses came they couldn't count on this kind of assistance any longer. Then the edict was in effect which demanded that boy babies be cast into the Nile. Children born under such a law are not the products of mere natural love. They are born out of faith! The rigors of such a decree could only move one to say, Blessed are the unfruitful! Only a faith that clings to God's Promise triumphs over the world, over "Egypt." In Christian marriage it is so important, therefore, that we stand firm on God's Covenant promise which comes to us and our children.

#### The Struggle of Faith

Perhaps it occurred to you as you read Exodus 1, 2 (if you didn't, please do it now!) that its record of the birth of Moses and the activity of his loved ones was a bit unrealistic. Who doesn't know — especially in this liberated age? — that marriage involves strong sexual passions, and that we now know that these passions *must* be satisfied. Amram and Jochebed, some would say, were not really so much a tribute to faith as they were evidence of the fact that sexual desire will have its way.

Not so! The Bible says that Moses' father "took to wife" Moses' mother. This means that he deliberately set out to establish with her a believing family. The entire context of Exodus 2:1 indicates that the great subject was the perpetuation and multiplication of the people of God in spite of Pharaoh's devilish policies.

But it is good to be sober about the realities which face Christian marriage in an anti-Christian world. Nothing is so fatal to the assurance of faith as an unawareness of the power and cruelty of God's enemies. Faith is something else than an easy optimism which underestimates the dangers. Faith reckons with the facts.

It is important to understand, however, that faith reckons with *all* the facts. It does not underestimate the wrath of the enemy, indeed. But neither does it

forget the power and faithfulness of *GOD!* After all, that is why it is called *faith*.

### The Strengthening of Faith

I think that Amram and Jochebed trusted in the certainty of God's goodness, promised to them as people of the Covenant. They were not unduly optimistic. They were sober believers. But they did not yield to pessimism either. They did not forget that He who promised is faithful.

The Scriptures indicate, I believe, how they were enabled to persevere in faith. God provided strength. When much is demanded in the way of faith, much is granted by God for the strengthening of our faith. This became evident in the fact that the more God's people were oppressed in Egypt, the faster they multiplied. God demonstrated thereby that He was with them in all their misery. When Pharaoh killed one, two were born in his place. The gates of hell could not overcome His children.

It is impossible to eradicate the people of God. You know that familiar expression: the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church. From church history we learn that God has often made His church to increase particularly in those times when men would destroy her. That was true in the times of persecution under Roman Caesars, and in the days of the Reformation. That must be true, I feel, in the U.S.S.R. and China, for example, today. That will be true if in the future we must live under circumstances similar to those in which Moses was born.

Amram and Jochebed received yet another sign for the strengthening of their faith. They saw that Moses was an unusually beautiful and well-born child. They sensed that he had not been given to become prey for the crocodiles. They felt, I believe, that God was preparing to deliver them in ways yet unknown to them, ways of His own sovereign devising, moved by His sovereign love.

### The Way of Faith

It is commonly said nowadays that people ought to be careful about bringing children "into this kind of a world." For some this means absolute birth control: to have any children is irresponsible, they claim. For many it means have very few children. The financial cost involved in child rearing, the emotional drain which parental care represents, the moral difficulties of an immoral age — all these considerations and more mean, don't have a large family.

We know little about the size of Moses' family, of course. And this isn't a discourse on the blessings of a larger number of children (which are great). But we can learn one thing from this account: the way of redemption and reformation is often the way of marriage and children.

Amram and Jochebed became the parents of none less than *Moses*, perhaps the greatest man other than Jesus Christ in all the world's history. Moses, the mediator of the Old Testament, the deliverer of Israel from Egypt, the leader throughout the wilderness

wanderings — *he* was born to this simple, faithful couple. This agrees, of course, with Psalm 8, "Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength because of thine enemies, that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger" (vs. 2). It is by the seed of the church the Psalmist declares, that God puts down the enemy! It is in the way of Christian marriage and childbearing that God saves and delivers His people.

That makes marriage important for the church. Moses was born from people who must have understood that, and who did the will of God in simple obedience. Having children is to share in God's heritage (Ps. 127), and to enjoy His reward. He often brings deliverance through little ones born to believing parents.

### Faith's Responsibility

Jochebed trusted God, and believed His Promise. And therefore she acted so vigorously and bravely when Moses was born. At complete risk of life she hid him for three months from the Egyptian police. When that could no longer be done, she prepared a floating crib and placed him in the Nile, setting Miriam as a watch. All of her ingenuity and ability was utilized to preserve the life of this "goodly child."

In that connection we can see an amazing combination of blessing and bitterness. God heard her prayers, and rewarded her efforts. The baby was discovered by Pharaoh's daughter. Jochebed was enlisted to nurse him. But at last however, she must give him up to the enemy, and he became the "son" of Pharaoh's daughter. God's blessings on our families are sometimes occasions for real sacrifice. After all, our children are subjects of the King!

That means one thing: Do what you can, as best as you can for your children as God's own heritage. See that they are reared in a Christian milieu. Help with their indoctrination in sound catechism classes. Use every avenue of Christian education. Do that believing that God has included them in the great program of the redemption of His people. Doing that believingly we will be able to marry and to stay married, even in times like our own! ●

*(Next time: Marriage as reflected in the life of Naomi and her family.)*

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## Correction

In the second to the last sentence of the article on "Dancing at Calvin and Christian Liberty" by Edward Heerema in the May issue, pp. 16-17, the word "their" should be "other," so that the sentence reads as follows: "Such demonstration should also face the question how the proposed program of social dancing is to avoid becoming an incitement to other dancing experiences that are more interesting and exciting than the antiseptic program at the college."

# Transcendental Meditation

EDWARD HEEREMA

Transcendental Meditation, popularly known simply as TM, has been called the drugless turn-on of the seventies. That's an apt description, for several reasons. By the TM technique a large number of people have found a measure of inner serenity and fulfillment without the use of mind-blowing and life-destroying chemicals. In this technique, furthermore, members of a secular society who do not know the sweet peace of prayer and fellowship with the Lord of life have found a deep rest from the stresses of a hectic, highly competitive world. And, for reasons we hope to make clear, TM may not be very prominent after the 70's.

TM can point to a number of facts which are no doubt seen as significant achievements in the popular estimation. Prominent names in the sports world, the business community and in the entertainment field are listed among those who practice this type of meditation. An article appearing in the local newspaper in 1975 listed prominent sports figures such as Joe Namath, Willie Stargell, Steve Carlton and Larry Bowa among those who practice TM regularly. Names of people prominent in government or military service are also listed as adherents. The theoretical framework of TM appears in what has been named the Science of Creative Intelligence (SCI), and this has been offered as a course for credit at a number of the nation's universities, including Stanford and Yale. The movement boasts its own university, the Maharishi International University of Iowa, located at Fairfield, Iowa. And note this — in 1972 a program for training public high school teachers to teach TM was launched with the help of a grant of \$21,540 from the National Institute of Mental Health of the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare. (It must be remembered that TM steadfastly claims that it is not a religion.) A "qualified teacher" of TM informed a meeting I attended that the Pentagon has a small room in it with the letters TM on the door where people can go to meditate in the TM fashion.

It is clear from the above facts that TM is something more than it was at first presumed to be, namely, the latest method by which hippies and similar people might find a psychic high. Perhaps that reputation was due in part to the fact that the Beatles were

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among the first to go to India to be trained in the new technique by its founder Maharishi Mahesh Yogi.

## The Guru

The founder and spiritual guide (guru) of TM, Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, has an interesting history. He was born in India in about 1918 and received a degree in physics from Allahabad University. But he was not satisfied with enlightenment through standard scientific means and decided to see it in a way more common to India. He spent thirteen years (1940-53) with a Guru Lev, who had discovered a meditation technique that came from the ancient Hindu writings, the Vedas. It is reported that Guru Lev instructed his pupil to develop a method of meditation for the masses to practice. After leaving the tutelage of the master the pupil spent two years in a retreat in the Himalayas. Then in 1956 he came forth to launch the Transcendental Meditation movement. It was at this time that he took on the name of Maharishi, which means "great seer."

This is surely the way this guru comes through when one listens to one of his devotees. To his followers he is the "great seer" who speaks infallibly with deep wisdom and knowledge. The "qualified teacher" of TM that I heard was obviously a person with some education. Her use of language was excellent. And her appearance was attractive, with no hint of the odd or the exotic in her dress. She frequently quoted Maharishi, and the words he spoke were unqualified truth to her. A TM leaflet declares that "the complete knowledge presented as the Science of Creative Intelligence is being brought to the world by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi."

## The TM Technique

The meditation technique of TM is disarmingly simple. It calls for a quiet period of meditation in a comfortable relaxed position with eyes closed for a span of 15-20 minutes in the morning and in the evening, preferably not late evening. However, though the technique is thus simple and easy to learn, it is nonetheless very specific, according to official TM teaching. It must be done according to the specific instruction given by a teacher who has been trained and qualified by Maharishi through TM's extensive teacher-training program. The technique is learned in a training course calling for intensive instruction and practice for one to two hours on four consecutive days. This four-day stint is preceded by three preliminary steps involving a free lecture on the great possibilities of TM, a free lecture on the main principles of the technique, and a personal interview with a TM teacher. The cost of the four-day training program probably varies somewhat in different areas. In my area it now cost \$165 per adult, \$110 for the college student, and lower rates for high school and junior high students.

Of central importance in this specific teaching of TM is a secrecy factor. It is called the *mantra*. Each meditator is assigned his own private mantra, or

meaningless sound, as the vehicle for his meditation. Webster defines mantra as a mystical formula of invocation or incantation in Hinduism and Buddhism. It is a Sanskrit word meaning sacred counsel or formula. A TM teacher's responsibility is to choose this secret word so that it fits the initiate's personality. Once the initiate has been given his mantra, he is to discuss it with no one, not even with wife or husband. Here are a few of the mantras which have surfaced in my reading — Sherim, Inga, Shiam, Ima, Ram, Kirim, Shri Ram.

The meditator sits comfortably with his eyes closed and listens to his mantra as it is first chanted to him by his teacher. Then he takes it up for himself, repeats it aloud at first and then silently. But always the mantra is involved in his meditation and is the necessary focus of the technique as it is practiced, at home, at the office, in one's car, or wherever one may be.

Two words are especially emphasized in description of the practice. These words are *natural* and *effortless*. It is a most natural technique, we are told, in which we are simply being ourselves and by this means develop our native potential. And no effort is required in doing this. Indeed, trying is absolutely forbidden. TM people describe the state of mind of the person in meditation as a fourth major state of consciousness as natural to man as the other three well-known states, namely, wakefulness, dreaming and sleep. This fourth state of consciousness is called "restful alertness." Though the meditator may seem to be dozing, actually his mind is very alive and alert. This deep level of consciousness is likened to the depths of the ocean, where all is quiet and without excitation. This is the deep resource of all our thoughts and knowledge. The process by which TM taps this deep resource of thought is called "direct experience" as opposed to intellectual analysis. Here is "pure creative intelligence," tapped by and exercised by the TM technique, we are told. "This innocent spontaneous process," a TM brochure states, "is increasingly pleasant as the mind is attracted deep within to the source of thought. When the mind transcends the subtlest thinking activity it is expanded to a state of pure awareness, its own unlimited reservoir of energy and creative intelligence."

#### "Cure" for Stress

It seems evident that no small part of the appeal of TM is in its promise of relief to people caught up in highly stressful situations that are so common in modern living. The word *stress* occurs often in the TM literature, and TM likes to show you glowing testimonials of people who have through the practice of this meditation technique overcome the nagging stresses of professional sports, business, government service or the entertainment world.

TM makes a number of claims concerning the beneficial effects of meditation on one's physiological functions. These claims are all supported by scientific research and findings, we are told. In meditation

the body enjoys a rest deeper than sleep, with the metabolic rate lower than in sleep. The practice of TM, it is further claimed, reduces blood pressure, enhances balanced functioning of the two hemispheres of the brain, reduces anxiety, counteracts insomnia, leads to a reduced use of alcohol and cigarettes. Thus TM invites all people to "enjoy development to a fully evolved state of life."

#### Invincibility

My rather low level of interest in TM was heightened when I heard a brief presentation on television in which the word *invincible* was used of persons who practice this technique. The year 1978 has been declared the year of invincibility. The logic of this remarkable declaration is as follows. The person who faithfully practices TM becomes increasingly a self-sufficient person. Within the depths of his own mind he finds the sure resources of all knowledge and intelligence. He is the "fully enlightened" individual. His bodily functions perform more and more perfectly. A new orderliness takes hold of his entire life, together with the joy of greater achievement and fulfillment. Such a person becomes invincible. The pressures and threats of life cannot disturb him. Individuals thus filled with peace and satisfaction are bound to have a wholesome and healing influence on society. Therefore Maharishi declared in 1977 that if one percent of a nation's population practices TM, that nation will become invincible. Through the influence of this core of TM practitioners a great order is brought to such a nation, with the result that there is less crime, less social disturbance and fewer accidents. It was announced, furthermore, that the United States would be the first invincible nation.

Aren't TM's claims getting to be just a bit excessive? Read on.

#### "If you can fly, you can do anything"

The well-spoken "qualified teacher" and devotee of Maharishi said it at the meeting referred to earlier in this article. She was speaking of the remarkable manner in which life's possibilities open up for the faithful follower of TM, and in that connection she said that he could even fly, and "If you can fly, you can do anything." A TM publication (*World Government News*, March 1978) was passed around showing a picture on the back cover of a person purportedly in a state of actual levitation. *Time* magazine in its August 8, 1977 issue made reference to this claim by TM and subjected it to gentle ridicule. Maharishi had declared that through the practice of TM, supernatural power (*siddhi*) becomes available to the meditator, and with this power he can become invisible, walk through walls and even fly. The *Time* article suggests that these astounding claims were made at a point when the public interest in TM was waning, and some dramatic new promotion was called for. In the year 1975, the magazine states, there were 40,000 trainees a month in the TM program and this had slipped to 4000 per month in 1977.



### To Fade With the 70's

In evaluating TM one needs no great measure of insight or courage to predict that the fortunes of Maharishi and his pseudo-religion are on the wane and that they will fade as the 70's fade away into the past. Maharishi wrote the death notice of his movement when he claimed supernatural powers for his adherents by which they could fly and do other amazing things.

These more spectacular claims highlight the serious weakness that lies in TM's claims generally. A young doctor is reported (*Wall Street Journal*, August 31, 1972) to have given up the practice of TM after a short time with the reaction that it is presented too much as a magic pill with a simplistic formula that says, "Believe this and all your problems will be solved."

That raises the question of the scientific authenticity of the research that is supposed to support many of the claims made by TM. The *Science Digest* of August 1977 reports on studies made on this research. The magazine charges that TM promoters are selective in the research they cite and expresses the opinion that there is misleading propaganda involved as TM tries to cultivate the "mystique of scientific credibility." Of no little interest is the charge that TM officially discourages comparing its technique with other meditation practices.

And what about other methods of meditation? Would not the daily practice of a "quiet time" of some sort bring physical and mental benefits like those claimed for TM? Recently the headline on the supermarket tabloid *National Enquirer* caught my eye (issue of May 16, 1978). The headline proclaimed in bold letters BEAT STRESS. Inside was a full-page article describing a plan of relaxation "tested and proven" by a pair of medical doctors at Harvard University. Many of the claims are much the same as those made for TM — reduced blood pressure, better sleeping habits, better health generally, reduced tension. The technique calls for two periods of relaxation per day of 15-20 minutes each, with the use, not of a super-secret mantra, but simply of the word "one."

### A Christian Reaction

Is TM a religion? It insists that it is not. TM does not come with a body of doctrine to be accepted, nor does it ask its followers to follow a certain moral code or exhibit a particular moral quality of life. In fact, TM boasts that one does not have to give up anything to be a follower of Maharishi — not even a vice. A TM practitioner is asked to be himself and to discover through specific meditation the full potential of his very self.

But, though TM does not have certain of the usual important marks of religion as we know it, religious characteristics are present. It has the infallible teacher, prophet, guru in Maharishi, who exhibits all the charisma of a religious leader. Also, unqualified acceptance of certain ideas and practices is required.

TM has no promise of eternal salvation, but it surely comes with promise of salvation here and now in its assurance of self-fulfillment, deep rest and joy. This is not salvation by grace, of course, but rather salvation by and from self.

The teaching that the rich fulness of life in achievement and joy and peace is found in the depths of the self elicits a negative response on the part of the Christian. Such teaching goes directly contrary to what our Lord has taught us when he said, "the things that come out of the mouth come from the heart, and these make a man 'unclean.' For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander. These are what make a man 'unclean'" (Matt. 15:18-20).

Completely out of accord with the teachings of the Bible and with the facts of life is the claim that the fully enlightened and orderly life can be achieved by TM's method of reaching into the deep inner reservoir of self, without an objective moral standard and without the gracious power of the Spirit of God. On this score TM sounds like a more profound version of *I'm OK — You're OK*. With its neat blend of eastern mysticism and occidental pragmatism TM subjects the individual to no moral judgment, offers a quick and easy "salvation," and requires no life of self-obedience. Surely such a pseudo-religion is a tempting morsel to hold up before today's secular, amoral and inwardly disheveled person. For many such, not knowing how to test the spirits, "it works."

TM has been described as "Hinduism in disguise." One does not find it hard to see why it should be so labeled. Whatever one may call TM, surely it is correct to say that there is another of those quasi-religious schemes that attracts the restless, searching hearts of people who don't know the true rest that is found only in the living God by His sure Word and His wondrous grace in Christ. It is He and He alone who can truthfully say, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life." ●

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### HE DIED FOR ME

*I was not there in person  
That day at Calvary,  
But yet I know it was my sin  
That nailed Christ to the tree.*

*I did not stand with Peter  
But do I not deny?  
As those who left the Master  
I too walk swiftly by.*

*O Jesus, Blessed Savior,  
I ask Thee to forgive;  
Lord, help me to be faithful,  
And show me how to live.*

ANNETTA JANSEN  
Dorr, Michigan

# Does Our Use of THE BIBLE Determine Its Authority?

PETER DE JONG

In current discussions and controversies about the Bible both in our immediate church circles and in the wider Christian world this question is coming to the surface as a most important one: Does the way we use the Bible determine what authority it has? While some would answer, "Of course, it doesn't" there seems to be much confusion and uncertainty in the minds of many people about how the question should be answered.

## A Revealing Book

A year ago my attention was directed to a book on this subject entitled, *The Uses of Scripture in Recent Theology*. Professor John Frame considered it so important that he devoted 25 pages of the Spring, 1977, *Westminster Theological Journal* to its review, calling it, "possibly the most significant writing on the subject since Warfield." The author is David H. Kelsey, professor at Yale University. (The professor informs us that his private title for his work had been *Text, Context and Pre-text*, but that he had discarded this for the other which he considered more bland but more accurate. One can understand his being intrigued with this alternate title since it does suggest clearly the diverse ways we see people using the Bible, some concentrating on a text, others stressing that a text must always be used in its larger context, and still others making an ostensible appeal to the Bible as a mere pretense to gain support for ideas which may not be biblical at all.)

## Its Purpose and Starting Point

The author points out that although traditionally protestant doctrines are based on Scripture authority there has been confusion on what this really meant. The book is about the meaning of "proving a doctrine from scripture" (p. 1). Setting out from some "theological position neutral" he attempted "to examine . . . ways in which theologians have . . . used scripture . . . to help authorize their *theological* proposals" trying "comprehensively" to include in his survey all views which call themselves "Christian." Not only does he propose to make an "objective" survey from a assumed "neutral" position (which already tells us a good deal

about his own unself critical assumption). He goes on to state frankly, "It is no part of our purpose to set up standards by which to decide when a theological position *really* is in accord with scripture. On the contrary, part of our thesis is that any question put that way is meaningless" (p. 5). In other words, his "neutral" position assumes that the only authority that has any meaning at all is that authority which people give the Bible in the way they choose to use it.

## The Gist of the Book

The book proceeds to show us the various ways in which a number of theologians use the Bible. They all date from the 1920s and 30s with one exception. That one exception is B. B. Warfield whom the writer calls "far and away the ablest mind defending Calvinist orthodoxy in the U. S. in the 1880s and 1890s" (p. 16). Among the other more recent theologians the writer finds some holding that the revelation is in the events, not in the Bible's account of them or in its doctrines or concepts (p. 32). They tell us that the revelation is in acts, not words, "dynamic," not "substantialistic" (p. 37). Karl Barth explained "that sometimes . . . the ordinary human words of the biblical texts will become the Word of God . . . in a Divine-human encounter" (p. 48). Paul Tillich considered the authority of the Bible to be in its symbols with the distortions and exaggerations of "expressionist" painting (p. 69). Bultmann saw the authority in what he called the "Christ-event" through which man gets "self-understanding" (p. 78). While Warfield's view might seem to differ from these others since he said that the Bible was authoritative because of "an inherent property," "its inerrancy created by God's inspiration of its authors" (p. 91) not because of its function, the author summarily dismissed Warfield's idea because here too he considered the authority of the Bible to be only "functional," in the way men use it. He found men using the Bible in various ways as (1) conclusion of an argument, (2) as data, (3) warrant, (4) backing or even (5) rebuttal of arguments (p. 144). He objected to the traditional Protestant claim that the Bible is the only authority (*sola scriptura*, p. 146), feeling that beside it one must place the results of historical research, aspects of contemporary culture and the church as authorities (p. 147). The author stated repeatedly that how one used the Bible as authority depended finally on ones *imagination*. Doesn't making imagination decisive turn the Bible into a mere "weathercock" (p. 170)? The writer answered his question by observing that that imagination was influenced by the church and changing cultural influences!

Warfield's way of construing Scripture was dismissed as "simply no longer seriously imaginable" to "many American Christians." "The passage of time has not so much disproved him as make him seem terribly culture-conditioned. And to insist that a Christian community now adopt his hypothesis might seem to demand that it archaize itself into a culture

now gone . . .” (p. 172). The author went on to admit that “In being conditioned by limits culture sets on what is seriously imaginable, theological proposals may turn out to be merely restatements of what is already imagined in the culture quite apart from Christianity’s central reality” (p. 173).

#### **Dr. Allen Verhey Follows His Teacher**

In addition to what this book shows about a common modern view of the Bible’s authority it has further interest for us because Dr. David Kelsey of Yale is the professor under whose direction Dr. Allen Verhey wrote his doctoral dissertation, and to whom Dr. Verhey acknowledges himself to be deeply indebted. As most of our readers may know, we had to object to the way in which Dr. Verhey in his classical examination and other writings uses the Bible. Although he affirmed the Bible’s authority as the inspired Word of God, he uses and defends a method of interpreting it that permits him at will to deny what the Bible plainly says. Among the materials which plainly show his misuse of the Bible in a way that conflicts with the Bible and our Confessions, his thesis on *The Use of the Scripture in Moral Discourse* takes an important place. No one who compares that thesis with this book of Kelsey can fail to see how closely Dr. Verhey’s argument and organization of material, line of argument; evaluations and conclusions follow those of his professor. As Kelsey’s book studies the use a number of modern theologians and Warfield made of the Bible, Verhey’s studies the use which Walter Rauschenbusch, an early modernist, and Carl Henry, a conservative, made of it. Like Kelsey, Verhey analyzed their use of the Bible as a data, warrant, claim, backing and rebuttal of arguments. Like Kelsey, Verhey maintains that one cannot move from the Bible to current applications without the use of warrants from outside the Bible for doing so, warrants that include scientific investigation, contemporary culture, etc. Like Kelsey he objects to the Protestants “sola scriptura” idea, the idea that the Bible is our only authoritative guide to faith and life. While Kelsey makes “imagination” decisive in how one is to use the Bible, Verhey in his thesis assigns that decisive role to “experience.”

#### **Conflict with the Bible and the Creeds**

A study of Verhey’s thesis made it obvious that such views cannot possibly be reconciled with the way the Bible and our Catechism and Belgic Confession teach that God’s law has direct authority to tell us what we may and may not do, and with what they teach (Belg. Confession, Article VII) about “THE SUFFICIENCY OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES TO BE THE ONLY RULE OF FAITH.” In this latter article we confess, “Nor ought we to consider custom, or the great multitude, or antiquity, or succession of times and persons, or councils, decree or statutes, as of equal value with the truth of God, since the truth is above all. . . . Therefore we reject with all our hearts whatsoever does not agree with this infallible

rule. . . .” Although Dr. Verhey says that he believes the Bible, believes that it is inspired and authoritative, believes what we in these creeds confess concerning it, he at the same time uses, defends and teaches a method of “interpreting” the Bible which lets him (and others) deny or set aside at will anything which the Bible says. Whether one says with him that “experience” or with his teacher, Kelsey, that “imagination” is what decides how the Bible is to be used, it is plain that the Bible has no real authority at all in such a procedure. One’s appeal to it is like one’s use of a faucet which one can turn on or off to suit his own convenience. In Kelsey’s words, the Bible has indeed been turned into a mere “weathercock” to point in the direction of the prevailing winds of thought.

This is not merely the conclusion. It was already implied at the beginning of the studies. When one starts out by saying that he is not going to make any judgment about who is right and proceeds to put believer and unbeliever, Warfield and Tillich (with Kelsey), Henry and Rauschenbusch (with Verhey) on the same level to determine from their uses of the Bible what its authority means, it is obvious that the real right of the Bible as God’s Word to command our submission and obedience has been rejected at the outset.

#### **A Growing Assumption in Church Life**

It becomes increasingly evident throughout our churches (as well as other churches) today that this notion that our use of the Bible determines its “authority” is not only the idea of a few exceptional professors. The notion is being more and more generally assumed and practiced.

#### **The Women in Office Discussion**

The official studies and general discussion of the issue of women in special church offices are increasingly revealing this assumption. Although the inspired Apostle Paul in his instructions regarding church offices plainly stated that the Lord had not assigned the offices of authoritative teaching and rule in the church to women (I Tim. 2:12 ff.; I Cor. 14:32-38) we have now seen the majorities of three study committees report that the Bible gives us no plain teaching about this matter. When the Apostle Paul tells us that his injunction is “the commandment of the Lord” this is dismissed as his cultural, male chauvinism; when the same apostle writing about the way of salvation through faith in Christ says that “there is neither Jew, nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:28), this is declared to be the Word of God and a ground for reversing what He said was God’s commandment. Dr. John Vriend in the discussion of these matters at Calvin Seminary in the meeting of April 11 arranged by the Committee for Women observed that it was becoming increasingly apparent that such matters are not determined

by (biblical) exegesis but by the historical and social situation. His observation was an accurate description of the present practice in our churches, although it flatly contradicted our claim that the Bible is our rule for faith and life. That appeal to the Bible by the committee majority in this matter is becoming, to borrow the apt expression of Dr. Kelsey, a mere "pretext." This discussion is only the most recent of a whole series of inconclusive arguments, inconclusive because the church can no longer seem to make up its mind whether to let the Bible decide anything or not.

#### **Another Example, the Homosexuality Decision**

The denomination was still enough bound by its traditional morality in 1973 to declare that "Homosexual practice — must be condemned as incompatible with obedience to the will of God as revealed in Holy Scripture" (Acts 1973, p. 52). But it made the decision on the basis of a report which had said, "we cannot simply apply the Old Testament prohibition without considering whether our knowledge of homosexuality may not modify to some degree our moral judgment about the homosexual problems of such persons" (p. 619) and "again we need to ask whether the judgment of Paul applies to those who are homosexuals as we have defined them . . ." (p. 621) and "biblical injunctions and prohibitions are to be honored in every instance where they are not overborne by either external necessity or by a higher value" (p. 631). In other words, while on this matter our churches are still maintaining what appears to be the biblical condemnation of this increasingly common vice, they officially did so only after being plainly told by their advisory committee that not what the Bible says but the present church judgment on whether or how far we at this point see fit to follow its directions decides the matter! Obviously in this case the Bible is no longer accepted as the real "authority" at all.

#### **What Does "Authority" Mean?**

Complicating this confusion about the Bible's authority" is the fact that the word "authority" is being used in two different ways. "Authority" in its primary and original sense means "legal or rightful power . . . to command" (Webster). Only in a secondary way is it used for "5. power due to opinion or esteem; influence of character, station, mental or moral superiority, or the like." Now we ought to observe that what is happening throughout our present-day society is that this primary notion of "authority" as a "right to command" (especially God's "right to command") is everywhere being opposed and rejected. The only "authority" that is being acknowledged at all is this "secondary" or attenuated one of the esteem or influence that people deem fit to assign to those that they for the moment choose to follow. After all isn't this the only authority that our "democratic" society, if consistent, will tolerate, an "authority" dependent on the "consent of the governed"? In this secondary

sense Dr. Spock, for example, was the "authority" for the training of a generation of children even though that doctor now reportedly admits that many of his ideas were mistaken. Now see this notion that the only admissible authority in today's world is this "secondary" kind which man himself assigns to what he chooses to follow, creating confusion in our talk of the Bible's authority. This assumption of only secondary human authority becomes plainly apparent in this book of Dr. Kelsey, in the way his enthusiastic student Dr. Verhey uses and misuses the Bible, and in the more and more of the decisions and policies of our synods and churches.

#### **The "Modern" Problem of Authority Is as Old as Sin**

We have been looking at this idea that our use of the Bible determines its authority as a modern development. It really isn't new at all. It is merely a more and more outspoken expression of something that is as old as sin and the Fall — man's revolt against the authority or right of God to command him. Genesis tells of God's command and of the devil's temptation to our first parents to let them decide whether God or the devil could make the better case for deserving to be followed. This temptation of the devil to give man the right to decide against God really puts man over God. This is the essence of sin and has characterized the whole history of man's sin ever since. Jesus' collision with the Pharisees and scribes always came back to this basic matter. They, like their forefathers "made the commandment of God of none effect" by their tradition (Matt. 15:3ff., cf. Is. 29:13ff.). That was why they became "blind leaders of the blind" (Matt. 15:14), exactly like many later theologians and church leaders.

It was not only the leaders who were guilty of this revolt against God. We see it in the people who when the Lord fed 5000 of them with a free lunch "were about to come and take him by force, to make him king" (John 6:15). Notice that although in this situation Christ, it appeared, might be made "king" or "authority," the real control was tacitly assumed to be with the people. They like today's voters would tolerate his "rule" only on the condition and as long as he was providing the free food (cf. John 6:26ff.). That kind of following of Christ was really no surrender to Him as their rightful Lord and King, but a rejection. Similarly today's Christianity and church life that follows Him only as long as it seems expedient and desirable to the sovereign people is no real Christianity at all but the anti-Christian apostasy from it. The Lord disowned that kind of followers, "Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say" (Luke 6:46)? "I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Matt. 7:23).

#### **A Possible Objection**

Someone might object to stressing this "authority" in the primary sense as "legal or rightful power to command." When Jesus said that the Jewish dealers "made the commandment of God of none effect" was

He not acknowledging as a fact this secondary kind of authority to nullify God's commandments? (Dr. Verhey in his thesis, p. 219, claims that "The inability or unwillingness to be consistent with a recommendation [for the use of Scripture] counts against it." "The recommendations here are that the first-order recommendations which the Christian community is unable or unwilling to act on consistently be disestablished.") We need to notice that the word translated in the King James Version "made . . . of none effect" is more accurately translated "transgress." Man imagined (and still does) that he can get away with setting aside the commandment of God. This, as Psalm 2 and a multitude of other Scriptures warn us, is his foolish arrogance. The Lord's unchanging Word condemns and brings judgment upon him unless he repents.

### **Compromise of the Bible's Authority Threatens Ecumenical Relations**

Our compromising course of letting our practice obscure the Bible's authority is bringing division within our churches and dividing us from other churches with whom we are supposed to share a common faith. I observed in last month's review of the Synod *Agenda* (p. 174; cf. *OUTLOOK*, June, 1978, p. 11) that our Interchurch Relations Committee frankly admitted that in our relations with other members of the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council (NAPARC) it has become "evident . . . that we do have different approaches to the Bible and different ways of reading the Word of God."

### **A Protest and Proposal for Toleration**

Dr. Harry Boer who in his book, *Above the Bible?* has attacked the inerrancy of the Bible (and his gravamen has attacked the biblical doctrine of election as expressed in our creed) in the March, 1978 *Reformed Journal* deplores our affiliation with the organization of Presbyterian and Reformed churches (NAPARC) who believe in an inerrant Bible. He flays the hypocrisy and double-talk of our synods who have tried to cover up the deep rift that exists within our churches regarding their views of the Bible. He wants to have this radical difference frankly recognized and tolerated throughout our churches as it is in our seminary.

### **This "Toleration" Is Intolerable**

This radical difference in belief regarding the Bible does need to be recognized and exposed. But it may not be tolerated. The notion that our experience or imagination may decide what authority we will permit the Bible to have must be rejected as a heresy which no Christian and no church may tolerate. Christ forbids us to exercise that kind of toleration. He said, "No man can serve two masters." Therefore we are compelled to press the charges against the views of Dr. Verhey. The Neland Avenue Church after having those charges before it for a year has judged his views permissible although it has not answered the objec-

tions to them. Therefore the case has now been brought to Classis Grand Rapids East which has appointed a committee to study it. Some fifty-five years ago Professor Ralph Janssen was deposed from office in our churches because although he claimed to believe in the inspiration and authority of the Bible he taught and practiced a "critical" way of using that Bible which contradicted that claim. Today our churches must exercise the same kind of discipline against such views if they are going to be faithful to the Lord who has called them.

And we need to seek closer ties with all who share our common, biblical faith at the same time as we reject those who reject it.

### **Needed — A Back-to-the-Bible Reformation**

Important though these activities are, there is something just as important and much more extensive that needs to be done throughout our denomination. The present confusion and discussions about the Bible expose that need although I fear that it has been with us for a long time. The notion that our use of the Bible properly determines its authority gains plausibility and toleration because, as a matter of fact, many of our members and our leaders have evidently been operating with it.

Why have we throughout our churches been teaching and following our traditional doctrines and way of life? Have we been holding them because we understood them and obeyed them as the plain teachings of God's Word, the Bible? Haven't they generally been accepted and passed along rather as church traditions accepted without much question or study regarding why we held them? Now many are attacking the beliefs and practices in an anti-traditionalist reaction against the old traditionalism. The trouble is that in many cases neither the attackers of the tradition nor the maintainers of it have really been going back to the Bible which is supposed to be our only authority for faith and life. Failing to begin on biblical ground, much of the discussion is inconclusive. The crisis situation into which we are entering demands that like our Reformed fathers who faced a similar crisis we get back to serious study of the real reasons why we must hold to Christian beliefs and practices — the reason that God has revealed and commanded them in His Word. That's the way our Reformed fathers found, maintained, defended, and formulated their way of faith and life. As now all of these things come under question and attack, if we are driven back to the Lord and His gospel as the source and ground of that faith and life, the result may in the mercy of God be a real Revival and Reformation. That with its biblical enthusiasm and zeal, could revitalize the training of our families, preaching and teaching of our churches, and missionary and social influence in a way our churches have not known for generations. Some of our Missouri Lutheran brethren are speaking of that kind of revival among them. Let us pray that the Lord may give that also to us as we trust and obey Him and His Word. ●

# An Interview

with

## Prof. C. Van Til

This article is a report on an interview which Dr. J. Van Bruggen, professor of New Testament at the Theological Seminary in Kampen, the Netherlands, had with Dr. C. Van Til, well-known retired professor of Westminster Theological Seminary, for *Nederlands Dagblad*. It was translated into English by W. F. Horsman and appeared in *Clarion*, the Canadian Reformed Magazine and we reprint it with their permission. Their co-editor, C. Stam observes in a concluding note that "We do have the impression that Dr. Van Til might have been somewhat more specific in answering certain questions, for at times the point seems to be evaded, e.g., with respect to the P.C.A. and Calvin Theological Seminary. . . ." We are sure that this interview with its colorful anecdotes will be of interest to many of our readers. EDITOR.

During a recent visit to Westminster Theological Seminary, I met Emeritus Professor C. Van Til, one of the co-founders of the seminary. Professor Van Til gained recognition for his work in apologetics. His books defend the faith against the assault of modern theology. We asked Prof. Van Til, still alert in spite of his 80 years:

*Did you always live in America?*

I was born in Grootegast in the province of Groningen. There were eight boys in the family, and one girl, but she died early. My mother said that I was the biggest cry-baby she ever had. We moved to a farm near Enumatil; my father kept cows, but he was also a dealer. I sometimes went with him to Market in the city of Groningen. When a deal was closed they slapped each other on the hands: good luck with it. We would eat there too; my father would order pork chops and bacon for two and I was only 8 or 9 years old.

Later we lived in Oldekerk for one year, and then we moved to Leek, because my father had bought 17 acres of land in Zevenhuizen, Friesland. I can remember pulling flax. I went to the Christian school in Leek; also in Enumatil; four years in the Christian School. The first thing we had to learn was question and answer 1 of the Heidelberg Catechism (What is your only comfort in life and death?). Then we boarded a boat of the Holland-America Line.

*When was that?*

In 1905 we left DePoffert where my grandfather lived, and we arrived at Hammond, Indiana, on the 18th of May, 1905.

*To what church did you belong?*

We were members of the Gereformeerde Kerken van Nederland. My father was "A" and my uncle was "B."

*And your mother?*

She went along with my father. I don't know of any differences.

*Your father grew up in the tradition of the secession. Do you feel he consciously tried to raise you in this tradition?*

Yes, they had their arguments for it, and they were sincere about them.

*Also somewhat against the "Doleantie"?*

No, not against; Kuyper's daily newspaper was discussed every week at Men's Society and my father attended faithfully, but he was definitely not "B" as far as he was able to understand the difference. He was a farmer, but he read and in those days everyone read Kuyper's *Pro Rege* as well as other works. I have read a lot of Kuyper myself. I read his *Encyclopedia of Theology*, especially Volume II about reborn and unregenerate men, and the absolute antithesis in all disciplines except mathematics and somatology. In my *Common Grace* I have demonstrated how Kuyper only saved himself at the last moment, or should I say: was saved. I also read Doedes and Van Oosterzee.

*I may assume, then, that although your family background was "secessionist," you were also intensely interested in the works of Kuyper and the leaders of the Doleantie and that did not become a stumbling block to you?*

Oh no, not at all. I read Smilde's book and my initial sympathy was toward "A," but I devoured much of Kuyper's writings.

*By then, of course, you were already in the U.S. because you were only 10 when you emigrated. Could you tell us about the years after 1905?*

Oh, certainly. We were quite surprised. We had never seen bananas or oranges, for example, and here they were a dime a dozen. It was great: *Een luilekkerland*. We arrived in America and my father was able to afford 2nd class train fare. At the station I saw a black man and I said to my mother, "That's a negro," and she answered "Must nait wiesen mit vinger" (don't point). That was not polite. But I had never seen a black man before. The train was incredibly slow. My youngest brother Sidney was still a baby. My mother and I had to sit for 24 hours, no sleeping car for us. Genesis describes the early Railroad when it speaks of everything that creeps upon the earth. That's what it felt like anyway.

My oldest brother Reinder and his wife had already emigrated and were temporarily living with relatives. He had written that it would be better if

we all came together, so that the family would not be split between the Netherlands and America. My brother Hendrik was already doing military service in Assen. That's how we came to Hammond, Indiana. Reinder met us with a horse and buggy. Later my father bought a small farm.

After our arrival, my brother Jake, who was six years old—I was 10 at the time—and I went to school in Clifford. We were complete strangers there. Both of us were placed in Grade One. I liked reading and by the end of the year I was in Grade Four. They called me "The Big Clompa" and my brother "The Little Clompa." When my brother Nick (13) joined us, they were at a loss, so they called him "Brother of the Clompas."

I was the first student from a Christian school. My parents were sorry there was no Christian school. In the Netherlands we carried our school money to school with us.

For a few years we attended a public high school in Highland, Indiana. It was then that a small Christian school was started in Munster, Indiana. At age 19 I decided I was going to study for the ministry. Instead of high school you attended prep school at Calvin College. Our professors were university-trained. There were several students of my age or slightly older. We came in separate groups. Van Andel taught us Dutch History and Art. At our students' club we discussed Dr. Machen's lectures on the virgin birth of Christ. I had read *Pro Rege* and Bavinck's *Philosophy of Revelation*. I studied theology for eight years. Prof. F. ten Hoor was anti-Kuyperian and my reaction was to become pro-Kuyperian. But he was a good man. Heins gave us practical theology. On Friday afternoons we all met together and presented sermon concepts. My first text was Revelation 3:20 (Behold, I stand at the door and knock). My second text was from Clossians 1. Prof. ten Hoor's reaction to my sermon was typical: "Everything the brother said was true but the text doesn't say that."

#### DR. K. SCHILDER

*Where did you study after Calvin College and one year at Calvin Seminary in Grand Rapids?*

I studied at Princeton for three years. Once I took Dr. K. Schilder into the great hall where the organ was located. I asked the organist to let Schilder play. I have never heard anyone play the organ like Schilder did that day. I also heard him preach in the Dutch Reformed Church in Paris (N. J.). He did not use a glass of water but a jug. He used the jug six times: six glasses of water. That's how he perspired. It was incredible.

*In what year did Schilder preach here? Was he a professor already?*

He was here two times. The first time he was accepted in all the Christian Reformed Churches. I was in the reception committee. The second time he was *persona non grata*.

*Were you impressed with Schilder during his first visit?*

Yes, I had met him previously in the Netherlands, and I had read his books.

*Where did you meet him in Holland?*

In his own home.

*Did you visit the Netherlands in the 30's?*

I left in 1905. I spent some time with an aunt and uncle in Groningen in 1926. I was eligible for a call then. When I returned I accepted a call to Spring Lake. That was a small village congregation. I thought a congregation in the city would be too much for a novice minister. I visited Europe again later. At that time I visited Paris. In Debrecen (Hungary) I received an honorary doctorate. I also visited Rome, Geneva, Brussels, Holland, and London.

#### PROFESSOR AT PRINCETON

*On your second visit you were already a professor. How long were you a minister?*

I was at Spring Lake for one year. Then, one week before classes started, I was appointed professor at Princeton. The president, J. Ross Stevenson, wanted some renewal. He wanted a seminary where all views were represented, a kind of liberalization. I knew Dr. Gresham Machen and Dr. Hodge wanted me to accept the appointment. I was replacing Johnson. When he heard of my appointment he wanted to come back because he didn't want me in his place. I was asked to teach apologetics, metaphysics, ethics, and philosophy of religion. This amounted to 2 or 3 hours more than anyone else had ever done.

I accepted the appointment and Stevenson replied, "I hope you will put just as much enthusiasm in your work and your lectures as you put in your letter of acceptance." That was meant sarcastically, of course, but what could I do? I only had one week to decide. On Sunday I preached my farewell sermon and the next morning I had to leave for Princeton.

I was only at the Princeton Seminary for one year. Then came the debacle in Minnesota. Gresham Machen was promoted from Assistant Professor to Full Professor, but that was politics.

*And then Westminster was established?*

Yes, in the summer of 1929. We began in the city. Dr. Allis' uncle made a house available there. Westminster rented it for \$1.00. That was a good year. Lots of enthusiasm.

*How many years did you teach there? When did you retire?*

I lectured until I was 75. Then I did some individual tutoring.

*You met K. Schilder during your visit to Europe and on his first visit to America. Did you meet him again at any other time?*

Yes, later when he came for Hoeksema. He came to Machen Hall and I suggested that he and Hoeksema did not agree on several matters. He was reluctant to

admit that, although he believed that Jacob and Esau were both in the covenant, while Hoeksema was convinced that God never shows any form of grace to the non-elect. I wrote in *Common Grace*. Then God could never be unfavorably inclined toward the elect and Christ would not have made His appearance in history.

### PRESBYTERIANS

*May I ask you about the church situation in the U.S.? You had a long and sometimes troubled tenure at the Seminary. You have closely watched the ecclesiastical and theological happenings in the U.S.A. You are also aware of the situation in the Netherlands. What is your opinion of the Reformed-Presbyterian movement in the U.S.? Do you see growth or decline? Are you optimistic or pessimistic?*

Well, there was an attempt to unite the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and the Reformed Presbyterian Church. But that failed because the O.P.C. could not get the majority to go along. I was happy about that because Boswell had had too much influence in the R.P.C. Prof. Berkhof once wrote: Dr. Boswell, I don't understand the difference between your Calvinism and your Arminianism.

Even so, they have good people, too, and a good Confession. But there is also a lot of chaff among the grain. Here in the O.P.C. the attitude is more typically Schilderian: What God says is right, because He says it.

*Do you think this attitude is strictly maintained in the O.P.C.*

Not everywhere. Many of our ministers are unable to persevere. The temptation is great when few people come to church. When they become a little more tolerant, attendance improves. They have their families, too. It is easy for me to talk, of course.

Then there is the Presbyterian Church of America. You know, of course, how it originated. The Christian Education Committee of the O.P.C. is presently working with P.C.A. We will have more influence there. We also exercise influence by means of the Presbyterian Trinity Hymnal which is used in many churches. It was prepared by O.P.C. people.

*Do you see a future union of the P.C.A. and the O.P.C.?*

I don't know.

*I understand that within the P.C.A. there are divergent attitudes and tendencies. Is it your opinion, too, that the P.C.A. lacks unity?*

I have heard things, but I have no first-hand information.

### FUNDAMENTALISM

*When we look to the United States from the Netherlands we often think of fundamentalism because*

*we see results of it there. In the meantime I have found that the word "fundamentalism" has several meanings in America. What is your reaction?*

My best answer is to repeat what Dr. G. Machen always said: "I am Reformed. Fundamentalists are brothers in the Lord; they will go with me to heaven, Liberalists, however, are not Christians."

*Fundamentalism is strong in so far as it stresses the inerrancy, infallibility, of the Holy Scriptures, is it not?*

Yes, certainly that is its bulwark.

*The word "dispensationalism" is also common in America. During my visit to Dallas I found a lot of literature on dispensationalism, e.g., Walwood, Pentecost, Ryrie. Do you think dispensationalism has much influence on American Christianity? And if so, why?*

Yes, I think so, the *Scotfield Bible* had a wide influence, and the first president of Dallas Seminary wrote a lengthy systematic theology which is all dispensationalism.

*What do you think is the most dangerous point of dispensationalism?*

Their unwillingness to take the Bible (literally). There are no Bible passages that speak of a distinct dispensation in paradise or of later dispensations. Actually the law dispensation then constitutes an alternate means of salvation. That is not Scriptural at all. Some have said: This is a heresy of the right.

*I have noticed that in the U.S.A. Christian ethics is rather neglected. Many seminaries do not even have an ethics professor. It seems to me that keeping the Sabbath day is a weak point even with Bible-believing Christians. What is your opinion on this?*

John Murray wrote a book on the Christian lifestyle. Generally speaking it is the liberals who have ethics. I think you are right in your observation that neither the Reformed nor the fundamentalists pay enough attention to it. They don't have the time.

### SEMINARIES

*Westminster wants to remain faithful to the Confession of the Reformation. Do you know of any other seminaries like it in the U.S.?*

Yes, Calvin Theological Seminary in Grand Rapids and the Reformed Theological Seminary in Jackson, Mississippi. New Brunswick has always been liberal. The Reformed Seminary in Holland, Michigan, is a little more conservative.

*When we compare Grand Rapids and Westminster we note quite some differences.*

In what way?

*In our opinion Grand Rapids is not defending the Scriptures and the Reformed Confession the way it used to.*

You should not overemphasize that.



*Do you see a fundamental difference between Westminster and Jackson?*

Not really. Jackson is younger, of course, and we have a much better library.

*The difference is only in age then. Jackson has just started while Westminster has been long established?*

Yes, that is the biggest difference. Besides, we are extraordinarily blessed. John Murray wrote that brilliant commentary on Romans in two volumes.

*Does anything going on in the Netherlands excite your interest?*

Not really. I don't really know the situation that well. Not the way I did when Schilder was still around. I visited him for tea: "Van Til, a cigar and tea?" He had written in his weekly about the strengthening of the Reformed element at Princeton. I wrote him: Professor, if half of the professors at Amsterdam resigned and Haitjema replaced them, would you describe that as a strengthening of the Reformed element at the V.U.?

*How do you think things went wrong at the V.U.?*

I think with Berkouwer. He did a lot of writing. Many people read him. In his first work on Barth he wrote: Barth is more nominalistic than Occam. Initially he was essentially still in full agreement with Assen — 1926. Later he visited Rome. Then he wrote two books. All they do is ask questions, or pose problems. Kuitert calls the second volume about the Holy Scriptures "that magisterial work," and it's exactly in that volume that Berkouwer starts to go wrong. Everything is a problem, problems with no answers. In 1963 he wrote an article: "The Strength of the Confession." He was deviating already then, and, of course, Kuitert has gone even further. Kuitert admits being a Berkouwer disciple. Maybe Wiersinga will go a step further yet. In those five booklets: *Cahiers for the Congregation*, what is left of the Scriptures?

*Are you not afraid that the same development will take place in the Christian Reformed Church in the next ten years?*

Yes, that's possible. May God prevent it. It will come to that. The only thing that can save us is holding fast to the Gospel. There is a tremendous similarity between K. Schilder and J. Gresham Machen. They were both men of determination: Christ is King above all.

*I hope with all my heart, Dr. Van Til, that God will provide men at Westminster who will continue in the right direction.*

I hope so too. We are dependent on grace. He who stands, beware, lest he fall.

*I am glad you have been so ready and willing to grant me such a lengthy interview. A heartfelt thank you for your cooperation.*

DR. J. VAN BRUGGEN

translation: W. F. Morsman, Burlington)

## Meditation

# GOD'S GRACIOUS ANSWER TO AN ANXIOUS WARRIOR



REV. JOHN BLANKESPOOR

But the Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon, and blew a trumpet. . . . And Gideon said unto God, If thou wilt save Israel by mine hand, as thou hast said, Behold I will put a fleece of wool on the threshing floor; if there be dew on the fleece only, and it be dry upon all the ground, then shall I know that thou wilt save Israel by my hand. Judges 6:34, 36

What a beautiful history this really is for the children of God! This kind of revelation gives them encouragement in their lives of faith. We all need this.

The scene is the valley of Megiddo, also called the valley of Jezreel. God is preparing Gideon for the battle and the deliverance He will give them from the thousands of Midianites. For several years they have invaded the land and harvested all the crops, leaving the Israelites starving. God calls Gideon, the least in his father's house to lead the Israelites in the attack. First of all Gideon must destroy the idol in his father's house. Reformation always begins at home, and with the removal of our idols. With the seventh invasion of these enemies of Israel, there is a holy reaction in Gideon. He is filled with the Spirit. With the blowing of the trumpet he calls the Israelites unto battle against this overwhelming army of godless invaders.

It was in the valley of Jezreel, also called the valley of Megiddo. Don't overlook this. Immediately this reminds us of the well-known word Armageddon of the Book of Revelation.

Armageddon (valley of Jezreel, Esdraelon) was a very important place in the history of Israel throughout the ages. It was in a strategic geographical position. Perhaps there is no place on earth where more blood has literally been shed than in this valley. This should not surprise us since the church is principally always

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fighting the battle of Armageddon. This is also true of every individual Christian who also sings, Stand up, stand up for Jesus. . . . He has to battle against sin in so many forms, and its results. His last enemy is death, says Paul. In this valley of Megiddo Sisera met defeat at the hands of Deborah by the deliverance of the Lord. Here king Saul was defeated and died. In the same general area Elijah killed the 450 Baal prophets. Later the house of Ahab was extinguished here by Jehu. And so we can go on. It was a common battleground. The Armageddon of Revelation is the climax of all the "miniature" Armageddons, of which this one with Gideon is one. In all of them the world opposes and oppresses the church with overwhelming odds so that, from the natural viewpoint or that of human calculation, the cause of the Lord in the church is hopeless. But Jesus Christ is the general of the armies of the Lord. He always was and always will be. At this time we see Gideon on the scene as a type or shadow of the great Christ to come.

\* \* \* \* \*

Gideon is filled with the Spirit. He blows the trumpet. His heroic faith is "contagious," as such faith always is. Often it takes only one mighty man to bring about a great change. The people in this instance respond and come out by the thousands. Gideon is the man of the hour, filled with courage and hope. Hasn't the Lord so led His people throughout the ages? Countless heroes of faith have been equipped like this with the Spirit, as true, genuine Christian soldiers in the cause of the Lord.

In ourselves we are always weak. Gideon felt this too, as the youngest member of the family. But when we have the Spirit of the Lord, we have faith, we have courage, and we can face it.

What a mighty man this Gideon is! His very life is at stake, but why should he be afraid?!

\* \* \* \* \*

And yet . . .

He is afraid. Now he is not so sure. He asks the Lord for signs, signs to strengthen his faith. Let on one night the fleece of wool be dry and the ground wet with dew and on the next night the ground dry and the fleece wet. Suddenly this mighty man seems to become weak. His faith begins to waver, somewhat. Is he sure, absolutely positive that the Lord will be with him? There is some, perhaps even a lot of uncertainty, and resulting fear.

But how can this be, at one moment so strong, filled with the Spirit, and shortly after that in doubt.

I'm glad that this is recorded in the Bible. It gives comfort and encouragement to millions of saints who are like Gideon. We are strong at one time, we sing and have peace in the daily as well as the greater problems of life; then at another time we wonder, we doubt, we are so afraid. We ask questions. And

we don't find Gideon's behavior so strange, not at all. Of course, it is all because of unbelief. But what Christian doesn't have unbelief?

Gideon asks for signs. And isn't it most remarkable that God doesn't become angry with him, not even when he asks for two signs?

Asking for signs in unbelief is rather common in Scripture. We think of the wicked Pharisees who several times asked the Savior for signs. The only sign they received was that of Jonah the prophet. This simply was a sign of judgment. Then we think also of Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, of the Emmaus travelers and also of Thomas. In all these and other cases the Lord seems to make a big distinction between *no faith at all* and *weak faith*. Gideon belongs with the group who at one time can say, with our God we can run through a troop or jump over the wall, and the next time feel and say, we can never make it. They know so well the words, "Lord I believe, but help me in my unbelief." The giant Abraham is also in this class. All Christians are.

Prayers arising out of such anxious hearts are answered. Where there is this kind of disposition of heart and frame of mind our gracious Lord is so understanding and patient. And He gives abundant signs. And with His answers our faith is strengthened. Gideon's faith received great encouragement with the dry and wet fleece.

\* \* \* \* \*

Wouldn't it be wonderful if the Lord would so answer us today? Or that He would still give us such visible signs? So we often think. But — what fools we are!

First of all, we in the New Testament, have not only the record of Gideon, but also of so many other instances where God helped His struggling, unbelieving children with their many infirmities in the struggles of Armageddon. Gideon had only one revelation, we have the records of hundreds of instances where God gave help in His understanding love and patience in Christ. We have the complete Word of God, preaching of the Word every Sunday and the Sacraments. In all this the Lord gives us the Gospel, the good news of the promise. Take note, the promise, the promise! Isn't the Gospel the good news of the promise, the promise of His love, the promise of His faithfulness to His children in the struggles of faith?

What we need is faith to believe these promises. Gideon believed the signs given him. This we often don't even do. And this makes our sin worse than Gideon's.

Every day our Lord is there in the promise of the Word, in a special way every Sunday with the preaching of the Word, and in a unique way every time the Sacraments are administered. God is always there in His faithful love in the Word and the Sacraments. And believing those promises we receive much of the Spirit. Lord, increase our faith. ●



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.

#### "ON FUND RAISING"

An Iowa reader writes: "I have been wondering about raising money for different causes by using methods like bike-a-thons, walk-a-thons, and now a new one, wake-a-thons. Can a Christian take part with that kind of gimmick to raise money? Considering stewardship and God's created order of day and night for work and rest, may a church go along with such?"

"Giving," writes David McConoughy in a little book entitled *Money The Acid Test*, "is the unselfish outpouring of one's self in substance. It is the voluntary bestowing of one's own possessions, expecting nothing in return. With the gift goes one's own goodwill, a part of one's very self."

I would like to go even one step further than that by saying that whatever we give, we have first of all

received. Giving is simply "returning" a part of that which we hold in trust from God. We are not the original owners of anything, but we are stewards of what God has given.

The Scriptures speak quite plainly about the fact that God wants us to give a portion of that with which He entrusted us for the support of the cause of His Kingdom. Such giving should be voluntary and from a heart filled with gratitude for God's goodness. Our giving to the church, for example, should not be viewed as "paying our bills," but as part of our total worship to a God who gives and gives unceasingly.

Then what of these various fund raising methods such as you mention in your letter? You do not mention who is using these methods, but I presume some young people's group or Christian education society, or the like, and not the church itself. I would oppose these kinds of methods of fund raising for the programs of the church itself, but not for some of its related causes. And that for this reason. Let's say a young people's group is raising money for paying expenses for convention costs, or a Christian education society is raising money for tuition support. In instances such as these, we are "paying ourselves" as it were; we derive direct benefit from it in the end. In part that may also be said of at least the "operational" part of the church budget, but there are many causes outside of our immediate community which are supported by our gifts to the church.

Now then, in the case of the youth group or the education society, I find no biblical principle which prohibits fund raising activities. Those activities may range all the way from a bake sale to a car wash to a walk-a-thon. The intent of these events is to raise money for the costs which we incur for a given cause from which we benefit. I realize that in the case of the bike-a-thon, walk-a-thon, or the wake-a-thon, there seems to be a great deal of wasted energy expended, but the fun and fellowship enjoyed in the process can hardly be called evil. I have personally participated in walk-a-thons for our Christian education society support, and have seen no evil in it. There are groups which also sponsor bowling events or golfing events, of which a portion of the proceeds are donated to a specified cause. If we may enjoy these good things which God has given us to do in fellowship with other Christians, then must we yet say that the proceeds derived from such events may not be used to support Christian causes?

Of course, let our spirit of "giving" in these instances too be one characterized by love. These are not "gambling" events; nor are they a "get-rich-quick" scheme for one person's profit as in a raffle. But as I see them, they are means by which the participants may enjoy fun and fellowship, and the organization by which the event is sponsored may benefit as well. And where such is the case, I do not know of a biblical principle which would indicate that God is offended by these things. ●

# Through His Death

## WE HAVE LIFE, FOREVER . . .

PETER Y. DE JONG

A spirit of pessimism has seized the souls of many right-thinking believers.

Nearly all main-line denominations and many smaller ones now register significant losses of membership. Church attendance, with few notable exceptions, declines at an alarming rate. Millions in our lands sustain little more than a nominal relationship to the church and seem to know next to nothing about the Gospel. What is more — they seem to care even less. Meanwhile public and private morality are victimized by the “situational” ethic which permits people to do pretty much as they please.

For this the leadership (including the “bureaucracies” which sit enthroned in denominational seats of power) will have to bear a large share of blame before God’s face. But these power-structures in Christ’s church (and the venerable K. J. Popma does not hesitate to label them **demonic**) could not flourish like the green bay tree, were it not for the indolence, the indifference, the spiritual insensitivity of the “little man” who goes to church faithfully and pays the bills. What he seems to want most is to be left alone in his dream that all still is well. At least, even when complaining about programs and projects and propaganda which he believes to be out of harmony with the Gospel, he silences his soul with the argument that nothing can be done about the situation anyway.

This is an abdication of personal spiritual responsibility within the church; a denial of the high office of all believers. And that **disease** is fully as despicable and deadly as any heresy. It is false doctrine wedded in unholy marriage to false practice, the practice of doing nothing!

Today the church of our Lord Jesus Christ needs not revolution but reformation.

This may take several shapes.

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This editorial is reprinted from the March 27, 1978 *Renewal*.

Not long ago we witnessed a “revival” and “reformation” of the sound Gospel within the Lutheran Church (Missouri Synod). There those who undermined Scripture and the confession were ousted. Among the Presbyterians in the south the reformation led to the establishment of a continuing church under new leadership and with a new name but faithful to the heritage of the fathers. In much the same fashion many Episcopalian believers, having suffered the sad erosion of Gospel standards within their communion, re-constituted themselves as “The Anglican Church in North America.” Such ruptures in ecclesiastical fellowship indeed produce much heartache. About this our forefathers could speak from experience.

All such reformations, however, begin at the “grass roots.” Although leadership is undeniably needed, there can and will be no change for the better in any congregation or denomination, unless Christian believers become aware once more of their high calling. Church reformation always begins in the revived and renewed life of individuals who hear Christ’s call as Head and King of the church to be faithful to Him and His Word.

No season of the year is more appropriate to think on these things than the Lenten weeks.

Shortly we shall commemorate the death of our Lord Jesus Christ, through Whom we have been redeemed from sin and reconciled to the living God. He has purchased us by the blood of the cross to be His own possession. And even as He who is the obedient Son and Servant of the heavenly Father passed from death into life eternal, so He offers victory to all who by a lively faith are united in Him. They are called to live for Him whose they are. Such obedience in all things — including their church membership — remains the test of the genuineness of their repentance and faith. He who gives all things expects much as “a living sacrifice of thankfulness” for grace abounding.

Let us, then, pray without ceasing for a truly God-glorifying renewal of the church in our day. This demands soul-searching which seeks personal reformation of heart and life (also from the sins of indifference and indolence) by the power of the Spirit. In Him is the wisdom, the patience, the courage needed. This will revive **the office of all believers** among us, by which Christ’s church can be restored to what it ought to be.

Often that pathway for God’s people seems overshadowed by deep, dark shadows for a time.

But, hallelujah, One goes with us along that road. He loves His blood-bought church dearly. He will never forsake His own. Having gone through death as the all-sufficient atonement for sin, He reigns now in glory to give spiritual victories to every believer and so to every congregation which rejoices in Him.

May we all during this Lenten season pledge anew our life and loyalty to that Savior-King.

# A CHOICE

WILLARD P. DE JONGE

During the course of a lifetime, one is required to make many choices. The choices one has to make may be simple or at times they can be very difficult.

During the winter of '76, I was required to make a choice. The principals involved in this instance were both living organisms: one a creature from the world of animals — a cottontail; the other a species from the world of plants — a forsythia bush.

I was quite proud of this forsythia. I had started it from scratch. A neighbor had given me a bouquet of forsythia in the spring of '75. When it had finished blooming, I planted the branches in my backyard. It had thrived all through the summer, clothing itself with lush green foliage. And then, of course, came fall and eventually winter.

The winter was in my estimation particularly generous with snow, intense cold and there had been very little thawing. Day after day and month after month, the world lay blanketed beneath a covering of white.

Subsequently, I discovered that my world was being visited at dawn and at eventide by a rabbit. During his first visits he presented no problems, bouncing blissfully through the deep snow.

One morning, however, I discovered him sitting contentedly alongside my forsythia. He did not ap-

pear to be nibbling on it, merely contemplating it. But something seemed to be registering itself in his mind, because he gave the shrub another long look before he took off.

A few days later, I noticed I was missing a few of the lower branches of the bush. As the days passed by, my forsythia seemed to be getting smaller. There was no doubt about it, the rabbit was using it for food.

Now, what should I do? Should I take steps to preserve the bush and deprive the rabbit of a food source or just comfort myself with the thought: "It's only a small, immature bush. I received it at no cost, and it could always be replaced with another for a small fee."

So, I adopted a policy of watchful-waiting. Waiting produced further visits by the rabbit and watching provided me with visual evidence that my forsythia would not be long for this world.

Finally, he seemed to have had his fill of the forsythia and showing his gratitude for my having provided him with this much needed delicacy, he left one branch for me to work with in the spring. Really, I thought he was being very gracious. You know, he could have eaten it all, but he did not.

A warm feeling of satisfaction enveloped me. I had been partially responsible for preserving the life of the rabbit and I still had one branch left of my little forsythia. It isn't very often in life that you can have it both ways. ●

church is lacking among us today, especially among many of our leaders. They would rather, it seems, that we become a "generally evangelical" church. I am disturbed about this and am willing to stand up and be counted in the effort to counteract this trend.

At the same time, I am not enthusiastic about your proposal for a "United Reformed Church." I'll tell you why.

In the first place, I believe your proposal borders on the schismatic. I don't think we may ever *plan* a secession (if that's what we want to call it). We must work for the *reformation* of the church at all times, and if that would lead, eventually, to a secession, then the Lord will make that plain in His own good time. We must simply be obedient to His Word and commandments, and resist all actions that conflict therewith. If that leads to the eviction of those who want to be faithful to God's Word and our creedal standards, then so be it. That will then be the time for further planning. It could, indeed, also happen that the duty of separation comes before eviction. When exactly that time comes is very difficult to say. Circumstances may differ, and there is never a clear black/white borderline in such matters. But to *plan ahead of time* for eventual separation, is to my mind unbiblical, and tends to the schismatic.

We must not too quickly call for separation either.

We must not too quickly call for sep-

aration either. Over against the Cathari, Donatists and Anabaptists of his day, Calvin said that "among the Corinthians no slight number had gone astray; in fact, almost the whole body was infected. . . . There was corruption not only of morals but of doctrine." And he says that the Galatians were "all but deserters of the gospel." Yet Paul does not hesitate to call them churches. The point being that we must not too soon give up on the church. Every secession or reformation has within it an element of schism, as Prof. K. J. Popma has pointed out. And if the latter element gets the upper hand, then the "cure" may be worse than the disease. The body of Christ is rent and bleeding enough today without adding to it unnecessarily.

A second reason why I'm not enthused about your proposal is that it is unduly idealistic and largely illusory. The grass always looks greener across the fence, and it may be tempting to wish for something that we didn't have, but the point is that God places us right where we are in the present, and that is where we have to work and do His will, come what may. There never was and never will be a "United Reformed Church" of the kind you envision. It wasn't there in Paul's day; John didn't find it among the seven churches of Asia Minor, and we won't find it today. Simply because we won't find perfection on this side of heaven.

In conclusion I want to say that what

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

### A UNITED REFORMED CHURCH?

Allow me a few comments with respect to what the Rev. Vander Ploeg has been writing about that "United Reformed Church." In the April issue of your magazine, he expresses his concern about the lack of response to his initial proposal. He attributes this to one of three reasons: they couldn't care less; they prefer to be spectators; they don't want to stand up and be counted.

I don't happen to fit into any of those categories. I too am quite concerned about a number of things going on in the CRC today. Generally speaking, we are losing our character as a REFORMED church. The desire to be a *confessional*

I write here is in no way to be interpreted as if to say, "let's grin and bear it." By no means. It is our solemn duty to act in harmony with what we promised when we signed the Formula of Subscription, and to oppose heresy and error in doctrine and life wherever it shows itself. We need more of the spirit of Guido de Bres who said he "would offer his back for stripes, his tongue to knives, his mouth to gags and his whole body to the fire" rather than deny the truth expressed in his confession. Would we had more of that spirit in the CRC today!

At the same time, let's speak the truth in love, stand up for the right and honor of God, and seek the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

One more point while I'm writing: Why does OUTLOOK never offer a word of praise or commendation for organizations like the C.L.A. (C.), the C.J.L. Foundation or the Association for Public Justice in the U.S.A.? In other words, why does OUTLOOK not have more of a genuine "Kuyperian" emphasis? Or, to say it still differently, why is OUTLOOK not more Calvinistic? After all, Calvinism is much more than "doctrine" or the so-called 5 points of Calvinism. But one would hardly know it by reading the OUTLOOK.

Sincerely,

J. TUININGA

### MORE REACTION TO "I HAD A STRUGGLE"

Dave Van Dyke, a Calvin College student sent us this letter, reacting to the *Banner* article to which other OUTLOOK writers have also expressed objection.

Editor:

The "I Had a Struggle" article of the February 28, '78 *Banner* really disturbed me. In that article the author explains a 4-billion-year age for the earth. But how he attempts to reconcile God's Word to the "scientific facts" of evolution and his "solution" — theistic evolution and rejection of historicity of Genesis 1-11 — raises more problems and questions than it answers, and it reveals a disturbing trend in the C.R.C. today.

The problems that attempts to harmonize Scripture with evolution and historical geology face include the facts that secular science has rejected all of them, and that the message of the Bible is inconsistent with *any* form of evolutionary theory. Theistic evolution has a hard time answering questions about the creation of the soul, the creation of Eve, and the meaning of the terms "made in God's image," "the breath of life," and "formed from the (nonliving) dust," which refer to the creation of Adam. Evolution of *any* kind contradicts the clear Biblical teachings that the creation was "finished" and "good" on the 7th day; that Adam and Eve were the first human beings; that God created life in fixed and distinct kinds; that sin, death, and universal decay began with the Fall

(not with evolutionary imperfections); and, that Christ's death was necessary for redemption. Since evolution is also incompatible with Christian ethics and has been the basis for nazism, communism, atheism, scientific humanism, materialism, racism, existentialism, the "New Morality," and a host of other ungodly philosophies, it should be evident that true Christianity and evolution just do not mix.

Attempts to compromise the Scripture and the "scientific facts" become even more ridiculous when one takes an objective look at those "facts." Although most people accept a great age for the universe and evolution as proven scientific facts, the truth is that there is very little hard, scientific evidence to support their beliefs; evolution and historical geology are based on unprovable and fallacious assumptions, and *a lot* of faith. Creation scientists (Henry H. Morris, for one) have pointed out that evolution is neither a natural nor a mathematically possible process, and that it actually often disagrees with scientific evidence. On the other hand, the creationists have convincingly defended the literal view of Genesis on a scientific basis and have shown the remarkable agreement between the Bible and scientific evidence.

If the historicity of Genesis 1-11 can be defended scientifically, then how much more can it be defended Biblically. The creation story in Genesis must be taken literally if viewed in the historic normal manner — in the light of the rest of Scripture. I am disturbed because this trend towards "demythologizing" Genesis our church represents an attack both on the infallibility of God's Word and upon the very sovereignty and wisdom of our Creator. The sad story of other churches proves that where this sort of "higher criticism" and compromising of the Bible is accepted, the way is open for attack (through "reinterpretation") on other supernatural Biblical events, such as the Virgin Birth and the Resurrection of Christ. A rejection of the historicity of Genesis has always accompanied, and is a part of, the growth of modernism in the church. It seems to me that theistic evolution and other such fence-straddling beliefs represent a blind acceptance of the philosophy of our worldly culture, a lack of faith in God, and a sinful rejection of the relevance and accuracy of His Word. It is high time that we as Reformed Christians renew our efforts to develop a truly Christian scientific system, and to base our scientific theorizing upon a genuine, Biblical faith, rather than on the ungodly philosophy of the world.

DAVE VAN DYKE  
Hudsonville, MI

### ON TOLERATING HOMOSEXUALITY

Dear Editor:

Mr. Douma's article about Anita Bryant and her stand on what once was called "Sodomy," made me decide to write a

few lines on this subject, and add a couple of excerpts from other sources.

It seems that among our spiritual leaders a certain amount of care is taken not to mention this controversial subject. (Ignoring it will not make it disappear but will, not unlike cancer in a human body, give it time to spread and do irreparable damage to the body: in this case, the body of Christ which is the church.) There is also a tendency to have so much compassion with the sinner that the seriousness of the sin is tuned down to just another sin among many. For those who know their Bible this ought not to be done. It has been said, "If Paul had known what we know, he would not have been so harsh on this subject." Assuming that the Bible authors were guided by the Spirit, this would suggest that God Himself was not aware of all the problems surrounding the issue, or perhaps the apostles gave their personal limited view; limited by their lack of knowledge. Rev. Robert K. Churchill in a letter to *Time* magazine states a different opinion. He writes: "Nations may revive from dollar slides; and earthquakes may not destroy the U.S. We may forget that the Super Bowls are played on the Sabbath, but as surely as God is holy, judgment falls on a nation who's sexual promiscuity and sex perversion is a way of life. As America arrives on the scrap heap of nations, Sodom and Gomorrah will ask: What took you so long?"

We may raise an eyebrow at the last sentence in this letter, but to me it sounds more biblical than what I read in the *Groninger Kerkbode* (Gereformeerde). In an editorial which took up two-thirds of the front page, W. H. Van der Ploeg tells us that homosexuality has long been considered an abnormality; physically or mentally. Lately more and more people begin to look at it differently. The article is divided in seven parts, each one with its own heading. The number six heading was: "De ander hoort er bij" ("The other also belongs"). This is what Mr. Van der Ploeg states: "In a family with a homosexual child, the parents will have to bring up the courage to face this reality together with the child. Do they regret that he will not be married and will have no children? Are they worried about what people will say? Slowly they learn to accept the homosexual without fear and unbiased within the family pattern, and to make it clear to the family that homosexuality is a normal human condition in which one can live happily. This way, living in many forms of love experiences, the family and its surroundings become rich and happy.

"If the gospel, the joyful message, is working to set free, then also and especially the congregation of Jesus Christ will have to be the house where everyone feels at home, with all his difficulties. The congregation has to give hope for a new world, where people give room to one another for each to find his own forms of relationships."

It is hard to believe that this kind of spiritual guidance goes unchallenged in the church wherein many of us grew up, were baptized and made confession of our faith.

ALBERT MEYER

Mr. Meyer sent us his article which had also appeared in the *Onward* magazine of the Brantford (Ontario) Christian Reformed Church.

## A LOOK AT BOOKS

**A HANDBOOK OF CRC ISSUES 1968-1978; 600 pages; published by Association of Christian Reformed Laymen, P. O. Box 1303, Grand Rapids, Mich. 49501; \$7.95. Reviewed by Rev. John Vander Ploeg.**

By all means' don't buy or read this book or even get anywhere near it, unless you are willing to be disturbed and possibly also stung into action. All those in the CRC addicted to the primrose path of complacency and comfort will probably never crack this recent publication. Without bothernig to become informed, they will rather blithely prejudge the writers as a coterie of malcontents as those beneath their notice of deserving of disdain.

However, these who constitute the Association of Christian Reformed Layman do serve and have served a purpose, and they are also filling an urgent needs as the CRC struggles in the throes of an ongoing controversy to determine whether or not she is to remain true to the faith of the fathers. Allowing for whatever errors in judgment for which these laymen may be faulted (as this observer sees it) they have nevertheless been second to none among those who have labored long and hard to alert the CRC constituency to the erosion of the Reformed faith that threatens the future of the denomination we profess to love and the cause to which we claim to be committed. If their efforts have met with frustration and even scorn from the side of those who are apathetic or who have their hearts set on being in the mainstream of today's apostate Christendom it should be recognized that this has been par for the course for all those who well know that to remain Reformed one must always be reforming.

*A Handbook of CRC Issues* is largely a compilation of articles previously carried in the *News Bulletins* issued by the ACRL during the past ten years. The material is now arranged under three headings: Winds of Change, Frustration of Protest, and The Victorious Church. There would be no justification for keeping all these controversial issues alive if they had been satisfactorily resolved. However, it ought to make every responsible member of the CRC squirm to be told in the *Preface* to this book: "It should be sadly noted that not even one of the cases of apostasy exposed in the *News Bulletins* has ever been corrected." There is just too much truth in that broadside to allow us to sit back and relax. As responsible members of the CRC it would be well for us to recognize that so often our severest critics prove in the end to be our very best friends.

*A Handbook of CRC Issues* is anything but wishy-washy. It uses strong language and minces no words. The book's Index listing subjects and names adds to its value. Some are quick to berate the laymen because of the way they go about this. But if their detractors (ministerial or otherwise) are doing nothing themselves to openly counteract the wrong trends within the CRC, the laymen may well reply, "Well, then we still like our way of doing it better than your way of *not* doing it." When ministers in the CRC (barring precious exceptions whose number may be increasing of late) condone, or approve of, evading issues or are too fearful to face up to them, let us thank God to find courageous laymen in the vanguard of those contending earnestly "for the faith . . . once for all delivered unto the saints."

**THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH - Who and Why Are We?** by Peter Y. De Jong. 72 pp., \$1.50. Available from Reformed Fellowship, P.O. Box 7883, Grand Rapids, MI 49510. Reviewed by Rev. Peter De Jong, Editor.

This is a completely revised and updated edition of a book which first appeared 30 years ago on *The Christian Reformed Church*. Its wide use throughout the church especially as a study for young people's classes which led to an earlier reprint is a tribute to its excellence and continuing usefulness. The author believes that our times of social, political and theological revolution make the use of such a booklet to help members, especially young members appreciate their church heritage more important now than in the past: I believe that he is right.

There have been a number of changes and improvements in an already good book. Suggested Scripture passages appear before each chapter and discussion questions after each chapter have been considerably changed. Attention is given to questions being raised in our time that did not trouble the church two or three decades ago. The history of the church

is treated more extensively and brought up to date. Pictures have been added.

Not only is this a desirable manual to supplement other more "doctrinal" catechism books for young people in the church. It should be an excellent introduction of our church heritage to all who come into our denomination through evangelism. A "Report on Adult Education" appearing in our 1978 Synod *Agenda* (p. 108) calls attention to our "growing identity crisis," "Who are we as CRC?" "What justifies our continued denominational existence?" It would be difficult to find or produce anything to help our members, old as well as young, meet such increasing questions than this little book does. It appears to be an excellent guide also for adult groups to study. The book is warmly recommended for a variety of uses.

(We correct a typographical error which crept into our June OUTLOOK ad listing this book as *The American Reformed Church* instead of *The Christian Reformed Church*.)

**CHRISTIAN CHILD-REARING AND PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT** by Paul D. Meier, M.D. Published by Baker Book House Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49506, 1977. 199 pages. Price, \$5.95, Hardcover. Reviewed by Mrs. Hattie Guichelaar.

Dr. Paul D. Meier believes that every child in a Christian home is entitled to wise, strong, loving and godly Christian parents. For this most difficult task, he has written this helpful book on Christian child-rearing which might well be a frequently consulted reference volume. Concerned Christian parents will find in this guidebook advice that is both Scripturally and psychologically sound. Integrating Bible truth and psychiatric research, Dr. Meier points the way to development of wholesome family relationships based on *preventive* Christian psychiatry and the absolute authority of God's divine revelation. Thoroughly discussed in language which the average parent can well understand are all aspects of growth—physical, mental, emotional, spiritual and sexual.

It contains a large helping of common sense know-how which should be welcomed by every parent. Lists of practical, positive as well as negative, suggestions are given for each level of the child's development from infancy to adulthood.

As a Christian physician and a psychiatrist as well as a Professor of Practical Theology at Dallas Theological Seminary and, most of all, the father of three young children, Dr. Paul Meier is eminently qualified to write this highly recommended volume. The foreword suggests it could be a "counselor-in-residence for the Christian parent and may well find itself comfortably at home on the reference shelf beside the Bible, Webster and Betty Crocker."

The book has no less than 436 books and articles listed in 22 pages of bibliography.

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