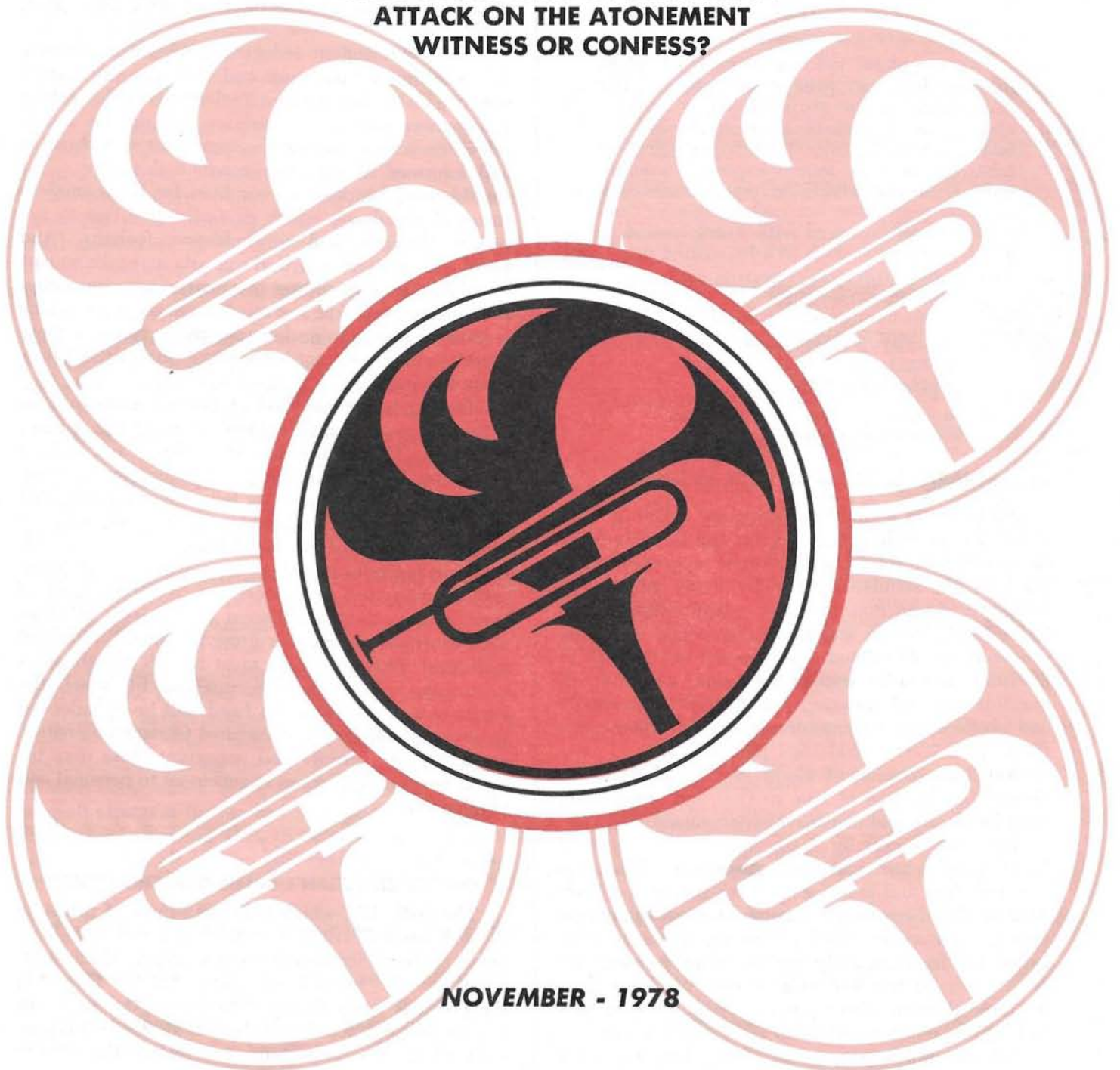


The Outlook

**WHO IS THE MAN OF ROMANS 7?
ATTACK ON THE ATONEMENT
WITNESS OR CONFESS?**



NOVEMBER - 1978

DEVOTED TO THE EXPOSITION AND DEFENSE OF THE REFORMED FAITH

OUR TESTIMONY

an appeal

to our brothers and sisters in the Christian Reformed Churches

II.

This completes the "Testimony" of which the first half was printed in October. The "Testimony" is the result of long discussion and a year of work by a committee and has been endorsed by over 40 Christian Reformed ministers who say that it expresses substantially their convictions on major issues that confront our churches today. Pastors and consistories who agree with it are invited to add their endorsements to it by writing to:

REFORMED FELLOWSHIP, INC.
4855 Starr Street, S.E.
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49506

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ON THE LIFE-STYLE OF TRUE BELIEVERS

All believers without exception are called by God to holiness in daily living. To this end the church by its preaching, teaching, and pastoral supervision must inculcate the standards for godly living affirmed in Scripture. At no time may the radical antithesis between God's people and the unregenerate world be obscured or obliterated. Ours is to be the life of Christian separation and consecration, where in all our thinking and speaking and acting — individually and collectively — demonstrate our distinctiveness (Rom. 12:1, 2; Titus 2:11-15; I John 3:7-10).

Any transgression of God's law, which is to be obeyed for the sake of love to God and fellow-man, must be clearly and consistently denounced.

Here we especially warn against the spirit of "libertinism" which under the guise of Christian liberty falls into and makes excuse for sins of the flesh. Against this heinous perversion of the Gospel the apostle Paul warns sternly, "For ye, brethren, were called for freedom; only use not your freedom for an occasion to the flesh (Gal. 5:13). We have been liberated through Christ Jesus in order to serve Him in loving obedience and so to edify one another.

All who fall into open sin of any kind must, for

the sake of their soul's salvation, be exhorted to seek without delay forgiveness in Christ and renewal by the Holy Spirit. This exhorting is especially incumbent upon the congregation acting in and through its office-bearers in church discipline. In the pulpit, in the classroom, and in pastoral counseling warnings must continually be sounded against the sins of divorce, abortion, drunkenness, fornication in any form, homosexuality, drug abuse, slander, and theft of every kind. Fully as deserving of God's wrath and disastrous for men's lives are such evils as the defamation of the holy name of our God and the desecration of His holy day, which has been sanctified for us by Jesus Christ as the day of rest and worship and rejoicing. We therefore reaffirm our appreciation of and urge the continuation of the practice of attending official preaching services twice on the Lord's Day (Heb. 10:24, 25).

While refusing to reduce the Christian life-style to a pattern of "touch not and taste not and handle not," we do declare without apology that today's stage productions both in the theater and on the family television screen are for the most part anti-Christian and injurious to spiritual growth and vitality. Nor should there be place in our lives for those modern forms of the dance which so easily give rise to improper thoughts and unwholesome feelings. And lastly — we declare that God's people may take no part in any form of gambling, no matter how innocuous such may seem on the surface, lest covetousness which is idolatry begins to enslave our lives. None of these practices may be accorded a place within the Christian's life-style.

That to which the God of our salvation calls us is the life of covenantal holiness (Lev. 19:1, 2; I Peter 1:15, 16). This is the life of walking and talking with Him by faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. Such friendship leaves no room for fellowshiping with that which is contrary to His blessed will, wherein we experience peace of mind and heart. To grow in this we must ceaselessly exhort ourselves, our children, and all who with us confess the Savior as Lord of their lives to daily meditation and prayer. Without such exercises no one can grow in sanctification and godliness. Therefore time must be left for all of us to engage in these holy occupations by which the presence and power of the Lord will be experienced in our lives. Hence our communal Christian activities, no matter how proper and important these may be, ought never crowd out an engagement to personal and familial piety.

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ON THE CHRISTIAN'S CALLING IN THIS WORLD

The godly life, which is the hall-mark of salvation through Jesus Christ (I Tim. 6:11; II Peter 3:11), may never be restricted to our membership in the institutional church. Instead, we affirm that the Gospel is the precious lump intended to leaven the whole of human life and activity in the world. God's purpose with salvation is to reclaim and restore the totality

of creation for His service and glory (Matt. 13:33; Acts 3:20, 21; Phil. 2:9, 10; Col. 1:19, 20; Rev. 5:9, 10). Thus God's people are to distinguish themselves radically from the pattern of this present world which lives by the principle of sin (Eph. 4:17f; I John 2:15-17). Such covenantal distinctiveness, without which every form of word-witness becomes vain and empty, must be pursued not only individually but also corporately and communally by us as God's children who together seek to walk in His ways.

Let it be clear, therefore, that we warn against the fundamentalistic error which separates religion from the broader areas of everyday living, thus restricting our allegiance to the Gospel largely to church attendance and personal piety. Christ rules His people by the royal scepter of His Word in every area of life. And only as we submit consciously and consistently to His government wherever we are and in whatever we do, can we be the salt of the earth, the light of the world, and a city set on a hill (Matt. 5:13-16).

At the same time we reject as a perversion of the Gospel any identification of church and world. Too often the lines of demarcation, clearly drawn by God in our baptism are effaced in daily life. Nor will we allow the world, because of its deep and desperate need or because of its vaunted wisdom and power, to write the agenda for the church. It is the living God who alone tells His believing people what to say and what to do as they seek to live for Him. And such reverence for our sovereign and gracious God, instead of producing a "hoiler-than-thou" attitude, will stimulate an ever-growing compassion for those who are without God and without hope in the world.

That to which the Lord of glory calls us as His people is to be office-bearers in His creation which through Christ is reconciled and redeemed for His praise, using all that He has created and given to us with thanksgiving (I Tim. 4:4, 5). What this implies is that every Christian is a full-time kingdom worker. Called by the One who has redeemed us and equipped with His Spirit, we bear witness to His sovereign rule over us and all creation and so become the "living epistles" we are called to be.

To a renewed awareness of this high office and calling of the believers in the world the pulpit must instruct and exhort and admonish God's people from week to week. Far too long, we fear, has this been neglected also among us. To the broad dimensions of such consecrated living in all relationships of life we call attention in the next sections of our address, meanwhile affirming that those who, upon hearing the Word for all of life, still persist in walking according to the pattern of this world disobey the God of grace and truth and judgment.

Here, also, a word concerning the rich privileges and opportunities of Christian women is in order. To many of them God has given abundantly the gifts of insight, sympathy, and eagerness to be of service to others. Those who are wives and mothers have occasion under God's blessing to shape in large

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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measure the future of individuals, communities, and nations. And while for them their families have the first and basic claim to their services, their lives need not be shut up within the home. Those who by God's appointment remain unmarried can and do enrich the lives of others in numerous occupations and careers. The withholding of ecclesiastical office from them, in obedience to the clear teaching of Scripture, in no way casts a threatening shadow on their dignity as fellow-heirs with men of the grace of God or minimizes the inestimable blessings which He through their services has poured upon mankind.

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ON CHRISTIAN MARRIAGES AND FAMILY LIFE

All of life is to be lived joyfully under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. This requires, then, that as believers we recognize that we are also office-bearers under Him in marital and familial relationships. To be fruitful to His praise and our well-being, these must be structured and directed by His Word.

Always the sacred tie of marriage is to be highly esteemed; its indissolubility vigorously affirmed by the church in the pulpit and championed in pastoral work. At no time and under no circumstances may pre-marital or extra-marital sex be regarded as options within the Christian life-style.

An understanding of the Biblical requirements for marriage will lay obligation upon the husband to give due reverence and love to his wife; likewise that the wife acknowledge her place as loving helpmeet and submit to his headship in all that is according to Scripture (Eph. 5:22-33; I Peter 3:1-7). In so doing both will recapture the joy of office-bearing in their respective roles. And children, as much by example as by precept, should be taught especially by their parents to prepare themselves for entering this holy estate carefully and chastely and intelligently as those who belong to the Lord. Where Christ sheds abroad His grace in the home, there His commandments will become a source of increasing strength and joy.

Ours are revolutionary times, characterized by the breakdown of authority both divine and human. Thus both parents and children need a renewed understanding of the place and purpose of parental authority. This, however, must be an exercise of parental authority which confesses that children are not our personal possession but the heritage of the Lord (Ps. 127; 128). Here the Word of God must be a lamp to our feet and a light upon our path, so that our children learn to obey their parents for Christ's sake and begin early to experience the blessings of covenantal obedience (Ex. 20:12; Eph. 6:1-4; Col. 3:20).

In this day of the proliferation of the "pill" and other birth-control methods we maintain that both the wilful refusal to bear children and the restriction of family-size merely for the sake of personal convenience, the advancement of a career, or financial gain constitute disobedience to our sovereign God who has pledged to provide believers and their children with all things necessary for time and eternity.

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ON CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

In order that our children, belonging to God's covenant, may be thoroughly nurtured in the fear and admonition of the Lord, it is essential that they be trained in the Lord's ways in the home, the church, and the school.

Here a solid foundation should be laid from the very beginning of married life by both husband and wife. Of utmost significance is the attitude and atmosphere breathed into familial relationships from day to day. Few influences can contribute so much to the strength of church, community, and country as homes permeated by the fear of the Lord as the beginning of all wisdom. Thus parents should engage repeatedly in honest self-evaluation, also with respect to their life-style, lest they satisfy themselves with having the form of godliness without its true and saving power (Gen. 18:19; Ex. 20:5, 6; Deut. 6:1-2, 6-9; Ps. 78:4-7).

At an early age the church should also engage in the instruction of covenant children. They should be present at public worship. This requires that parents shall carefully teach their children what takes place when God communes with His people there and that preachers take due and proper note of the presence of the little ones before the face of the Lord. We believe with all our heart that no better pattern for catechetical instruction of children and young people can be provided than that offered by the *Heidelberg Catechism*. Where this has been set aside, it should without delay be reinstated, even as required by the *Church Order*. By the use of this venerable "teacher" the children under God's blessing will in due time be able to make a proper profession of their faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, to assume their responsibilities as active members of His church, and to serve as citizens of His kingdom in all areas and relationships of life.

But in addition to the home and church, the children of God's covenant need and are entitled to good Christian schools. The growing secularization of our modern society makes such schools more imperative than ever before. Because in our society so many repeatedly move from place to place, all Christian parents are under obligation to give serious attention to the presence or absence of such schools in the area to which they plan to remove.

Such schools for Christian instruction deserve the wholehearted support of all believers, whether married or not. Parents and consistories are also called upon, without infringing upon the God-given authority of the teachers, to help promote the Christian character and curricula of these institutions. And in the struggle against the antichristian spirit of this age we exhort especially our teachers and professors to be on guard, lest the instruction which they give stains itself with ideas, theories, or methods inconsonant with the Holy Scriptures. A school is never Christian simply because it has been so founded in

times past and bears that name; it is Christian only when the Lord Christ is acknowledged in word and deed as the sum and substance of truth, understanding, and wisdom by which we are called to live.

God provides us by means of such schools with an outstanding and fruitful means to witness to His Word of grace for all of life. Increasing dissatisfaction is being registered with the educational and moral level prevailing in many state-controlled and state-supported schools. Parents desirous of the quality of education which good Christian schools can give and willing to support them by word and deed should be encouraged to make use of them, always with the proviso that the Reformed character of these institutions be not imperilled. And wherever such schools are not yet available for the children of the covenant, we urge parents with consistorial advice and support to move without delay in that direction, even when it may be necessary to ask for financial assistance from Christian believers living in other communities.

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ON CHRISTIAN RESPONSIBILITY IN OTHER RELATIONSHIPS

All people live in a cultural situation which embraces individuals in their many-sided relationships and societal structures. This arrangement God has willed for man's life by His creation-ordinances, since no one can live or die rightly by himself. But with man's deliberate fall into sin, these relationships and structures have been perverted and deeply stained by sin. Only the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ can redeem and restore man and so set Him free once again to serve the living God according to His revealed will. The Christian therefore has the high calling, together with fellow-believers, to reclaim all areas in which he lives and moves and has his being for the Lordship of the blessed Savior. Nowhere under the sun is there a place of which He does not say, "This is Mine!" And to this battle to reclaim all of life for Him whose we are and whom we serve the pulpit must clearly and continually call all Christian believers.

Few relationships and activities in man's life upon earth have become so thoroughly secularized and subjected to satanic influences as that of work, together with its economic implications.

Here we affirm, in sharp contrast to the patterns cherished by those who do not honor Christ, that believers must follow the pattern which God Himself has set. In six days He created heaven and earth and all that they contain; on the seventh He rested and rejoiced in the works of His hands (Gen. 2:1-4; Ex. 20:11). Clearly the Bible teaches the high dignity of all labor (Deut. 28:1-6; Ps. 128:1, 2; Prov. 31:10f; Eccl. 9:7-10). It is man's assignment to have dominion under God over all things in obedience to His revealed will (Gen. 1:28; 2:15, 20; Ps. 8:5-8). Only so will labor be experienced as a meaningful and joyful aspect of our lives (Ps. 90:16, 17; 127:1; II Thess. 3:10-12). To

work simply to insure financial security and to obtain life's necessities together with some luxuries produces both a physical and spiritual enslavement which denies man's true nature as God's image-bearer and co-worker.

The choice of vocation or occupation has, indeed, become increasingly complex in our society. Often this is accompanied especially in the lives of young people with a measure of uncertainty and distress. Yet Scripture clearly asserts that our sovereign God has His plan, place, and purpose with every human being. And for all who look to Him for direction and follow His Word, a serene and self-fulfilling life will be their reward. Thus parents and especially competent Christian teachers and counsellors should guide our young people with the high ideals of service to God in Christ in that calling wherein they can be a blessing to others and work for the manifestation of His Kingdom among men.

It is also imperative that as Christians we recognize our calling to be stewards of our time and the fruits of our labor. With these, to be sure, we supply the needs of ourselves and our families. But God lays a direct claim upon a proportionate share of our goods for the furtherance of His cause and kingdom beyond personal and familial life. Here we are commanded to do good to all men, especially to those of the household of faith (Lev. 19:9-10; Ps. 41:1, 2; Prov. 19:17; Mal. 3:7-12; Luke 6:38; II Cor. 9:6-11; Gal. 6:9, 10). As a people highly privileged in having received so large a proportion of this world's wealth we should share these bounties freely and liberally with the underprivileged.

Our pulpits must speak prophetically on God's will with regard to the use of resources and goods. "The earth and its fulness are the Lord's" (Ps. 24:1). Thereupon Christians, both individually and communally, ought to communicate this message to those in high places. This includes not only those clothed with political power but also leaders in the areas of business and labor, the professions and the trades. God has created of one blood all nations and people under the face of the heavens; He wills that we as His people promote justice, peace, and love, in order that His Word may everywhere become more triumphantly manifest to His praise. And to make this Christian witness in the several areas of labor, education, the professions, social service, and politics more effective, believers should, wherever possible, unite organizationally to demonstrate the Lordship of Jesus Christ over all of life. Such organizations may never be ends in themselves, to secure worldly influence or advancement or power. They, too, shall be a blessing in the earth only as they in obedience glorify the God of creation, redemption, and judgment.

This, let it be clear to all who read and reflect, is no setting forth of a social or socialized Gospel which imagines that man's efforts — whether in the church or in the world — can bring the kingdom of God to fulfilment upon earth. According to His sure promise God will accomplish this at the time of the glorious

appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ at the end of the ages. But our duty is to be signs and pointers to that kingdom which God in grace even now reveals in the world. And lest there be any misunderstanding, this manifestation of God's gracious rule springs from and demonstrates its beauty and blessedness only where men's hearts and lives are regenerated by His Holy Spirit.

CONCLUSION

To such a life the God of our salvation now calls us.

Around us the darkness is deepening despite all the intellectual and scientific advancements which are being registered. The pains and perplexities of mankind everywhere are multiplying. And within the churches we see the spirit of compromise with worldly standards and ideals increasing. It is urgent, therefore, that by God's grace we renew our pledge of love and loyalty to Him.

This is a humbling experience, for the stains of self and sin are altogether too obvious in our lives.

But trusting in His forgiveness for every sin of omission and commission, we will together experience the renewal of our lives and the reformation of His church. Then in and through the church as God's people the light of the Gospel will once more shine brightly. Our hearts and lives will be united to serve Him with joy and confidence. And such a committed, covenantally-obedient people, which in word and deed proclaims the kingdom of God in all its fulness, will be a blessing among all peoples until the day of the full victory of our Lord Jesus Christ, whose we are and whom we serve.

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I certify that the statements made by me are correct and complete.

MARY KAISER, Business Mgr.

legalism... on which side?

PAUL INGENERI

Paul Ingeneri is Director of Education and Evangelism for the Seymour Christian Reformed Church, Grand Rapids, Mich., for the last two and a half years and a Master of Church Education student at Calvin Seminary. He was born in the Boston area, grew up as a Roman Catholic and was led by a liberal college education into total relativism. He came to know and appreciate the authority of the Bible as God's Word as it led him out of this predicament into the knowledge of God and His Gospel. Now, disturbed by the way the authority of that Word is being ignored by recent movements and Synod decisions in our churches, he contributes this article.

In recent years those who have been against women holding leading and ruling offices such as elder and minister have been accused of being literalists, obscurantists, and legalists of the worst kind as they are inhibiting members of Christ's church from exercising their gifts. These people are said to be pushing as Biblical norms directives which were relevant only for the New Testament cultural situation. Were this true, and I don't believe this is the case, they would of course be legalists. There is another kind of legalism however which is more subtle yet far more harmful to the well-being of the church. It's the kind of legalism that's always looking for a loophole to bypass the demands of the law of God.

The Pharisees were not legalistic so much because they made up extra rules but because they were experts at rationalizing their way around the demands of God's law and undercutting its principles. Edersheim notes their way of getting around the rabbinic law against going more than 1000 yards from home on the Sabbath. They deposited two days' food supply at 1000 yard intervals before the Sabbath and thus established these spots as temporary homes. They would then be able to proceed 1000 yards from each point without technically transgressing what they affirmed as the law.

I see such legalistic wrangling in the exegesis of those who would have women take leading and ruling offices in the church. The Scriptures are affirmed as the Word of God while at the same time specious methods of reasoning and interpretation are used to undercut their authority and plain import. We might look at the article "Not ready yet?" by Nickolas Wolterstorff (6/78 *Reformed Journal*) as an example.

Evading What the Bible Says — The article begins with the observation that three study committees have concluded that there is no decisive Biblical evidence against opening all the offices of the church to women and that "these have done their best to find the evidence." The '73 effort was not a search to find the

evidence against opening these offices to women. The Synod of '73 was not at all willing to accept the report and appointed another committee. This unwillingness must not be attributed to male bias or the weight of tradition but to some observations stated by the '75 committee that the '73 report (1) did not do justice to the different roles which the Bible assigns to men and women especially in the home and family and (2) used the Bible as a source of information on which to base sociological conclusions instead of as a Divine revelation.

Yet, after these strongly critical statements, even this "conservative" committee engaged in the same legalistic tactics of looking for loopholes — searching for reasons why we don't have to be bound by what the Bible says. Three times they observed that, if followed literally, these passages might forbid a few things that some of our churches are already doing and so by this "method of interpretation" reached conclusions similar to those of the '73 report. It has been aptly pointed out that a conclusion reached this way is more "a committee's prejudice than the Bible's teaching."

The '78 committee report, partially analyzed in THE OUTLOOK, May, '78, was frustrating to me because of its lack of exegetical argument pro and con for positions stated. In reading the report I could not see how the clear recommendations had come from the "some felt this way — some that" presentation and with this type of presentation the meaning of key passages was distorted or at least left unsettled. The three committees certainly did not engage in a strong effort to find the evidence against installing women. Van Groningen also mentions that this last report left out several crucial passages dealing with the headship principle and women in society.

Dr. Wolterstorff goes on to say in his article that the committee ignored two crucial ideas in favor of allowing women ruling participation. These are the "redemptive-historical pattern of Scripture which leads up to Christ's radically liberating way of interacting with women" and Galatians 3:28.

In order to hold the first as a valid argument you have to believe that the Old Testament principle of male leadership was merely a sociological-historical product of male chauvinism and cultural conditioning and was not determined and assigned by God. What then happens to our high view of Old Testament Scripture? You have to blind your eyes to the fact that Jesus did not assign the office of apostle to even one woman despite His radically different way of dealing with them. It is significant that He acted against every Scribal and cultural aberration of the law with respect to women but never against the Old Testament principle of male leadership. Note too that, although the teachers of the day needed correction as they had perverted the idea of male leadership into the heresy that women are somehow less than men, Jesus' radical corrections did not include any talk of action suggesting female leadership.

In order to believe that Galatians 3:28 should be

decisive (in plain English that means it would essentially wipe out the Corinthians and Timothy passages, the headship principle, elder qualifications as husbands . . . as cultural) you must accept the idea that equality between men and women before Christ means identity of function, and this is just not so. King Uzziah in the Old Testament (II Chron. 26), certainly equal with the priests before God and as able as any of them to burn incense, was struck with leprosy for trying to usurp a function assigned to the priests alone. Ability to perform a task and equality before God were not the decisive factors in determining God-ordained function then or now.

An Erroneous Claim — Furthermore the article states that there are only two passages which speak to the issue at hand and these only indirectly. There are only two if, of course, you dismiss the lessons of the Old and New Testament as merely cultural manifestations of male domination, water down Scripture to say that the only authority in the church is that of service, ignore altogether Ephesians 5:24, and make the crucial determination that headship in marriage has nothing to say about and will not be affected by women ruling in the church.

Some have done this in an effort to appeal to our more egalitarian culture. But we cannot "dispose" of these principles without weakening our position on Scripture's absolutes and authority. Such a weakening appeals to people of our culture mired in relativistic humanism.

I Corinthians 11 Does Not Cancel I Corinthians 14 — Looking then at I Corinthians 14:33-35, Dr. Wolterstorff reasons that I Corinthians 11:5 says women can pray and prophesy in the assemblies so the passage in question cannot be taken to mean women must keep silence in the churches. Even if we grant that I Corinthians 11:5 is speaking of public worship (some don't and find it reasonable to say "in the presence of and to the edification of others but not in the official gathering"), we must first note that women wore a mark of submission and that this mark was based on the headship principle God-Christ-man-woman (vs. 3). So if they prophesied and prayed somehow the idea of submission still had to be maintained today. Here the last committee observed that "the prophetic phenomenon, i.e., the reception of immediate revelation, gradually disappeared at an early point in the church's development" (p. 363, '78 *Agenda*). What has replaced it? — essentially the sermon. Can we say that a woman can preach, exhort, teach authoritatively over men in public worship and somehow still bear a mark of submission? I think not.

But suppose we say the Greek words *aner* and *gyne* are not to be taken here as man, woman but only as husband, wife. Would this restricted (husband-wife rather than man-woman) headship principle not have effect on the function of all women, single and married, in worship? Would we hear Paul saying, "You single women can function on the same basis as the

men, you are equal and there is a leveling out of all differences here as no man is your head . . . but if you get married then you will be restricted and may only function in worship in a way that does not conflict with the headship principle of marriage. . . . And you married women can function on the same basis as the men here if, e.g., your husbands are home sick, because then you wouldn't be conflicting with the headship principle of marriage?" Is this our idea of headship in marriage and how it would affect male-female functioning in worship? Did not all women somehow bear a "mark of submission"?

Secondly, note how Paul puts a strong statement of equality in the middle of his argument (vss. 11, 12). It reads like Galatians 3:28 . . . men and women are equal and interdependent. This refutes the idea that since women are to function differently in some respects, they therefore must be inferior to men. But right after this strong statement of equality Paul goes back (vss. 13 ff.) to the concept of the mark of submission.

Though some feel that his additional grounds come more from the cultural situation of his day than from anything inherent in nature, this in no way throws out the normative principle of vs. 3 and the fact that it affects women's functioning in ecclesiastical assemblies. Nor can one appeal to these grounds (vs. 13 ff.) as showing that Paul handles the issue of women's functioning as he does slavery, not wishing to "rock the boat." Paul tells slaves that in Christ they are free (Gal. 3:28), and if they can gain their physical freedom they should (I Cor. 7:21). On the other hand though Paul speaks of male-female equality in Christ (the same Gal. 3:28) and demonstrates this by his action with and praise of women, he not only does not tell women to seek their "freedom" from the principle of headship and its effects on ecclesiastical functioning, but he uses every argument to buttress the stance that this principle is normative for all time and does and should affect women's functioning in ecclesiastical assemblies. Far from dismissing I Corinthians 14, I Corinthians 11 supports it!

The import of I Corinthians 14:33ff. is further distorted and weakened by the statement that it only relates to good order, i.e., women who (might have) been seated separate from men (as was the synagogue custom) shouldn't have questioned their husbands across the aisle and since we don't separate sexes now that's no longer a problem, therefore this passage doesn't relate much to our situation and "that leaves I Timothy 2:12 and the case (against women in leading and ruling offices) is beginning to look pretty precarious."

But it's not that easy to dismiss I Corinthians 14:33 ff., and especially its relation to I Corinthians 11:5. Herman Ridderbos, the distinguished New Testament interpreter, summarized his discussion this way, "It seems difficult to escape the conclusion, however, that to 'keep silence in the church' means the same thing as the words in I Corinthians 14:28 'to be silent in the meeting of the church.' One is

to think of this praying and prophesying of the women (I Cor. 11:5) as restricted to pneumatic utterances outside the official gathering" . . . (Paul, p. 462).

Further, look at the repetition and strength of the phrases Paul uses — "should keep silent," "not permitted to speak," "should be subordinate," "shameful to speak" — all in two verses. Is all this necessary just to get across a simple good order rule on speaking across the aisle? Doesn't it appear closer to the truth that women's questionings were only part of the issue dealt with here by Paul?

Consider the strength of the supports used, the practice of all the churches (33b) the law (34b) — possibly Genesis 3:16 dealing with inferences of women's subordination from creation and the fall, and this capped off by Paul's statement that what he has written is "a command of the Lord."

Changing Culture Doesn't Annul God's Commandment — Considering the application of the headship principle to I Corinthians 14 and that passage then to our own situation, the '78 committee makes this statement (p. 367, *Agenda '78*): "Cultural circumstances determined how a principle was applied to a specific situation. Today we must ascertain our own cultural circumstances and then proceed to apply the Biblical principle to those circumstances."

Is this accurate? Is this reasoning going to help us apply the headship principle and the passage in question to our own situation? Did Paul take the normative headship principle, look at his cultural situation, and then see that (cult. sit.) as the determining factor in his application of the principle? Didn't Paul rather state "the command of the Lord" as the determining factor in how he applied the principle? No matter what you say about the type of argument or the supports used, the Lord inspired Paul's writing here and commanded him to apply the headship principle in this manner. But if we see the culture as *the* determining factor here, as the '73 committee did, of all Old Testament headship, then we can throw out most of our Divine revelation as cultural and only rely on man's "enlightened" common sense.

The Effort to Nullify I Timothy 2 — The article's examination of I Timothy 2:8-15 is a masterpiece of "technical loopholism." It is stated that, "We men have allowed all the injunctions but one in this passage to drift into cultural oblivion." This kind of reasoning was examined in *THE OUTLOOK* (4/78) where Rev. Jelle Tuininga observed that principles like these "remain in force today, but in a different form. The form changes, the norm abides." Is it not obvious in I Timothy 2 that praying without anger or quarrelling is a norm for today although lifting holy hands is cultural? Is it not further apparent that women should adorn themselves today modestly . . . and be characterized by good deeds and that the wearing of braids, gold, etc., implied something about the wearer in Paul's day which they don't today? These injunctions have not at all slipped into oblivion

and it is inconsistent for someone who speaks of examining the historical-cultural context in other passages to deal this way with I Timothy 2.

It is then argued that *only* if the passage says Paul does not permit women to have authority over men rather than wives not being permitted to have authority over husbands, is the passage relevant to excluding women from leading and ruling offices. But as was shown before in our discussion of I Corinthians 11:5, the headship principle, whether referring to husband-wife or man-woman, affects and is affected by the ecclesiastical functioning of women. It will be a big mistake to assume that women can take leading and ruling positions in the church and not violate the headship principle of marriage which we hold.

In Our Churches Deacons Also Rule — Much more can be said about the strong enduring supports Paul uses for his inspired proclamation in I Timothy 2 and more can be said against the legalistic “loopholism” used to support the concept of women in leading and ruling offices, but I want to address a related serious situation largely unknown to our people.

Synod of '78 accepted the minority report which leaves churches free to have women serve as deacons *provided their work is distinguished from that of elders*. The partial grounds stated are that there will be no violation of the headship principle *as long as the office of deacon is expressed in terms of assistance and service*. The problem is that it isn't expressed only in terms either in our Church Order or in our church practice!

Article 35a of the Church Order states that “in every church there shall be a council composed of the office bearers (ministers, elders, and deacons). The council (ministers, elders, and deacons) is responsible for the general government of the church.” [See also Belgic Confession, Article 30 — Editor].

In many churches the full council, not just the consistory, makes major church policy decisions even when these have nothing to do with “assistance and service.” Also in small churches where there are fewer than four elders, the Church Order states deacons may meet together with the elders — separate elders and deacons meetings being deemed unnecessary. Though the work of elders is distinguished generally from that of deacons, the deacons do exercise the authority of sharing in the general government of the church and in a small church can exercise even more authority.

The main historical reason for this sharing of government, which does not appear anywhere in Scripture, seems to be “a fear of the oligarchical evils experienced in the church of Rome” with a few *controlling* the entire church. So in small churches it was considered advisable to meet together and not have separate meetings heeding the admonition of Proverbs 11:14 . . . “in a multitude of counselors there is safety.”

Here arises the ultimate in “technical loopholism” as advocates of women in leading and ruling offices

have stated that they will use this somewhat blurred distinction between elders and deacons in our Church Order and practice to gain a foothold for women in the government of the church.

As many churches are now considering deacon nominations, this information should be widely disseminated along with arguments on both sides of the women in ecclesiastical office issue. Much more is at stake than even our view of Scripture. . . . It is our faithfulness to our covenant God! ●

who is the man of Romans 7:14-25?

CORNELIS PRONK

An Important Question

Does Romans 7:14-25 describe the experience of a regenerate man who is speaking in this passage? The answer to this question is very important, for it colors one's views on several key doctrines of the Christian faith. Charles Hodge may say that “there is nothing in the view [namely that Paul is speaking here of an unregenerate man] which implies the denial or disregard of any fundamental principles of evangelical religion,”¹ but this, in my opinion, is too generous a statement. Those who believe that Paul is speaking here of an unregenerate man will, no doubt, hold different views on the extent of human depravity and the degree of the believer's sanctification than those who interpret this passage as referring to a regenerate person.

The history of the interpretation of the passage before us is not only most interesting, but also most revealing. It shows that with few exceptions all those whose theology may be classified as Augustinian or Reformed have understood Romans 7:14-25 as describing the experience of a Christian. On the other hand, those holding to the view that Paul is speaking here of an unregenerate man, either himself or someone else, have generally been Pelagian and Arminian in their theology. This is not to say, of course, that the mere fact that one disagrees with the classic Reformed interpretation of this passage makes one an Arminian. But I believe that it is not entirely without significance that “Arminius began his career of departure from the commonly received opinion of the Reformed churches by writing a book in exposition of the seventh chapter of the Romans, and [that] Faustus Socinus in Poland was engaged at the same time in writing a book on the same subject and to support the same views.”² It should, however, be mentioned in all fairness that

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many of the Medieval scholars, including Thomas Aquinas, agreed with St. Augustine's interpretations, but this fact would hardly cause anyone to regard them as Calvinists!

Admittedly Romans 7:14-25 is a difficult passage, and there remain problems regardless of which interpretation one favors. The best thing one can hope for, then, is to arrive at an interpretation which leaves the fewest problems and which harmonizes the best with the context and the rest of Scripture.

Three Views

Historically there have been three main positions regarding this passage. They may be summarized as follows:

- (1) Romans 7:14-25 is Paul's autobiographical account of his own pre-conversion experience.
- (2) Romans 7:14-25 is not autobiographical, but depicts man in general, or the Jew in particular, apart from Christ, under the law.
- (3) Romans 7:14-25 describes Paul's own experience as a believer.

Position (1) was a popular interpretation of this passage until the early decades of this century, but has since been largely discarded in favor of (2), mainly due to the work of the German scholar W. G. Kummel. In his *Romer 7 Und Die Bekehrung Des Paulus*, (1929), Kummel contends that Romans 7:14-25 does not so much refer to Paul's own experience under the law, as to the struggle of an unregenerate man seen through the eyes of a regenerate man. The frequently used "I" and "me" in the passage does not, therefore, refer to Paul himself, but is a rhetorical device used by the apostle to dramatize the account.³

H. Ridderbos, who basically follows Kummel's interpretation of Romans 7, more specifically sees here a reference to "the moral man shackled by the law with whom Paul can so easily identify because he was once so himself."⁴ A. Hoekema, agreeing with Ridderbos, puts it this way: "What we have here in Romans 7:13-25 is not the description of the regenerate man, but of the unregenerate man who is trying to fight sin through the law alone, apart from the strength of the Holy Spirit."⁵

This leaves position (3), or the classic interpretation of Augustine, Luther and Calvin, according to which the passage before us must be understood as referring to Paul's present experience as a believer. This third interpretation commends itself most strongly to me, for reasons which I will state in this paper.

Paul Describes His Experience as a Believer

In the light of the fact that the pronouns "I" and "me" are used some twenty times in Romans 7, strong evidence is required to indicate that Paul was not speaking of himself throughout this chapter. Certainly, the unprejudiced reader of this epistle would have difficulty with Ridderbos' statement that the passage before us "is unquestionably not to be taken in a biographical sense as a description of Paul's personal experience . . . [because] Romans 7 and 8 are too much concerned with the individual experiences."⁶

Why couldn't the apostle interrupt his argument

and insert a reference to himself to illustrate the point he is making? Paul does this several times in this epistle, e.g., in 9:1-2 and 10:1, where the context may also be described as redemptive-historical.

Also, the change of tense between vv. 7-13 and 14ff. supports the view that the same person is speaking. The difference is that whereas in 7-13 Paul speaks in the past tense about his experience, he changes to the present tense in 14ff. to indicate that what he is going to say next concerns his present experience as a Christian. "The fact that Paul does not make much of the transition, that his thought moves from past to present almost unconsciously, underlines the degree of continuity which Paul recognizes between his pre-Christian experience and his experience as a Christian."⁷ It seems rather arbitrary, therefore, to discount the possibility of Paul's speaking about his own experience, whether in the past or present tense, while there is nothing in Romans 7 itself to suggest that he is not doing this, except if one is trying to prove a hypothesis or theory.

And of course there is such a theory, namely that Paul's language in Romans 7:14-25 cannot possibly be the language of a justified and sanctified believer. According to Ridderbos and others of the school of Kummel, there is too great a contrast between the condition portrayed in Romans 7:14-25 and that described by the apostle in Romans 6:1-7, 14 and Romans 8. The "wretched man" of 7:23 laments, "I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members." But he has just said in 7:6, "But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code" (N.I.V.). How can this possibly be the same person speaking?

I suspect that if Paul would have said something like this: "O, I feel so disappointed with myself at times, because I still sin occasionally, but thank God I live a victorious life most of the time," no one would ever have questioned whether this could be autobiographical, because such language would fit in much better with what seems to be the teaching of Romans 6 and 8.

But Paul does not use such optimistic language in Romans 7 and therefore many have problems fitting vv. 14-25 into the context. A. Hoekema sums up the problem this way: "The mood of frustration and defeat which permeates Romans 7:13-25 does not comport with the mood of victory in terms of which Paul usually describes the normal life of the Christians."⁸ The conclusion is therefore: Romans 7:14-25 describes the experience of an unregenerate man, more specifically a Jew (Ridderbos) who tries to "go it alone" (Hoekema).

Answering Objections to this View

My problem with this interpretation is that it ascribes to the unregenerate man powers and desires which the Bible clearly and emphatically states he does not possess. Let me illustrate. The unregenerate

man, which according to this view, is able to discern the spiritual character of the law (v. 14), condemns the evil which he does (15), wills the good and hates the evil (15, 19), wills not to do the evil (16, 20), and delights in the law of God (22).

But these are all activities of the mind and will, which according to Scripture, are completely unattainable for the unregenerate man. Apart from God's grace, man is "dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2:1), unable to do any good and unwilling as well, because he is a slave of sin.

Ridderbos is on dangerous ground when he contends that it is wrong "to deny zeal for the law or desire for the good to every man outside Christ, or to consider such impossible in him."⁹ He is thinking here of the Jew who knew the law and tried to keep it as best he could. But the New Testament teaches clearly enough that the obedience of even the strictest Jews, the Pharisees, extended only to the outward letter of the law, but never to its spirit. It was precisely when Paul recognized that the law was spiritual that he saw his own carnality. Before this he had no such insight into his depraved nature. "I was alive without the law once," he tells us in 7:9, meaning that as long as he knew only the outward character of the law he had not thought it such a difficult task to obey its precepts. He was alive then, in good shape morally, in his own opinion at any rate. "But," he goes on to say, "when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." When God showed him the tenth commandment which governs not outward actions, but inward thoughts and desires, then he realized that he was a sinner. He saw now that here was one commandment he could not possibly keep. In fact, the more the law said, "thou shalt not covet," the more he started to crave for forbidden objects. So far was this strictest of Pharisees from delighting in the law at that time that he deeply resented it for its impossible demands. As Donald McLeod says, "The effect of the law upon our depraved hearts is akin to the effect of the sun on any putrid organism. It provokes resentment of God's authority. It creates a slavish fear of penalty which is itself incompatible with love, the very essence of obedience."¹⁰

It is therefore only the Christian who will say what we read in v. 14, "We know that the law is spiritual; but I am carnal, sold under sin." This cannot be the language of an unregenerate man, because, as I said already, his eyes are closed to the real nature of the law, until the Spirit regenerates him. Thus Paul shows that the function of the law both before and after his conversion had been "to identify sin and to condemn it by pointing out God's perfect will, but in neither case had the law given Paul strength to overcome sin."¹¹ The result was a tremendous conflict in his soul. He wanted so much to obey the law, but he realized again and again that he fell far short of that perfect obedience that was required of him. This conflict in the believer is not to be compared with that which takes place in the life of the unregenerate. The latter will, indeed, experience anguish

at times when he sees how far his conduct is from what he perceives as the ideal. But that his experience can come anywhere near to what we read in Romans 7:14-25, I deny most emphatically. In the unregenerate man the conflict is at best between his flesh and his conscience. But in the believer it is rather a conflict between flesh and Spirit. Calvin says therefore that the conflict here depicted by Paul is found only in the recipient of the Holy Spirit. In the natural man, he says, there is never any hatred of sin. God's people, on the other hand, "condemn their sins, because they abhor them with genuine feeling of the heart and detest their conduct in committing sin."¹²

Ridderbos and others object to the strong language used in our passage and maintain that this cannot possibly be descriptive of believers. It must be admitted that Paul does indeed use very strong expressions here: "I am carnal, sold under sin" (v. 14). How can Paul describe himself as "carnal" if he is a regenerate man? Is it true of a child of God that he is still "in the flesh"? Romans 8:8 seems to rule this out, for there "in the flesh" is clearly predicated of the unregenerate. Yet there are references in Scripture which indicate that "fleshly" or "carnal" are used as adjectives to describe believers. Paul accuses the Corinthians of being carnal because of their conduct which was unbecoming Christians. There seems to be a difference, then, between being "fleshly" and "in the flesh," the former being descriptive of a child of God considered from the point of view of his old nature and indwelling sin, while the latter term is applicable only to the unregenerate man. Paul laments the fact that he is still "fleshly," because he is keenly aware of the presence of sin in him (vv. 14, 17, 20). Therefore, as Murray says, "If the flesh still dwells in him, it is inevitable that in respect of the 'flesh' in him he should be called 'fleshly,' and it is not inconsistent with his being regenerate that he should so characterize himself because of the flesh which is still his."¹³ As for the expression, "sold under sin," these words are often compared with I Kings 21:20, where Elijah says to king Ahab: "I have found thee, because thou hast sold thyself to do that which is evil in the sight of the Lord."

There is, however, a big difference between the "sold" in Romans 7 and the "sold" of I Kings 21. Paul says that he has been sold under sin, whereas Elijah charges that Ahab has sold himself. As Berkouwer explains it: "In the case of Ahab we have simon-pure hostility to God and an unconditional surrender to the Evil one. In the case of Paul we have sin as an overpowering force which makes him cry out against it. . . . Even in his being sold under sin in the daily experience of being overpowered, Paul is not a slave to sin. Servants of sin—that is what believers used to be; now they are servants of righteousness."¹⁴ Berkouwer cautions against all attempts to explain this "intolerable contradiction," considering them doomed to failure, and concludes that "the subject of Romans 7 is not the natural man as seen by the believer, but the believing child of God

as by the grace of God he has learned to see himself.¹⁵

But why does Paul use such strong language here? Was he perhaps exaggerating when he called himself a slave of sin, and a wretched man? No, I believe he was no more exaggerating than Job was when he said, "I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes" (Job 42:6), or David who cried, "iniquities prevail against me" (Psalm 65:3), or Isaiah who confessed, "We are all as an unclean thing, and our righteousnesses are as filthy rags" (Isa. 64:6). What all these saints had in common was a deep awareness of God and His holy law and of their own sinfulness. Let no one think this was a slavish, groveling kind of fear. No, it was a childlike fear consisting of love, adoration and respect. Paul, like all true saints, loved God and delighted in His law, but he was painfully aware of his inability to keep that law as he ought and wished. He simply did not measure up to the high standards set before him in that holy, just and good law of God. Why not? Hadn't the Holy Spirit given him a new nature whereby he was enabled to keep the law? Yes, "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus [had] made [him] free from the law of sin and death," enabling him to fulfill the righteousness of the law in the strength of the Spirit (Rom. 8:2, 4).

The Continuing Struggle Against Sin

Yet Paul knew he was far from perfect. He was aware of indwelling sin, and the old nature in him, though dead in principle, still made its presence felt, opposing the law of God. Whenever he wanted to obey that law of God, there was that other law or principle which overpowered him, so that he could not do what he sincerely wanted to do. But does this mean that Paul never obeyed the law? No, not at all. Few if any other saints ever lived a holier life than the apostle Paul. Yet it was not a perfect life, and this is what made him lament as he did in Romans 7. Horatius Bonar puts it this way:

A right apprehension of sin, of one sin or fragment of a sin (if such a thing there be), would produce the oppressive sensation here described by the apostle, a sensation which twenty or thirty years' progress would rather intensify than weaken. They who think it is the *multitude* of sins that give rise to the bitter cry, "I am carnal," are greatly mistaken in their estimate of evil. *One sin left behind would produce the feeling here expressed.* But where is the saint whose sins are reduced to one? Who can say, "I need the blood less and the Spirit less than I did twenty years ago?"¹⁶

Plumer, in his commentary on Romans, quotes a certain Wardlaw as saying,

The more truly holy a person becomes, the more spiritual in mind and affections, the stronger will be his impressions of the evil of sin, and of his own sin, and of the extent of his disconformity to the character and law of God. . . . As a man advances in holiness, corruption at the same time remaining in him, he will be disposed to express his abhorrence of himself in exceedingly strong and vehement terms.¹⁷

Arthur Pink describes it even better:

The closer the Christian draws to Christ the more he will discover the corruption of his old nature, and the more earnestly will he long to be delivered from it. It is not until the sunlight floods a room that the grime and dust are fully revealed. So it is only as we really come into the presence of Him who is light that we are made aware of the filth and wickedness which indwells us, and which defile every part of our being. And such a discovery will make each of us cry: "O wretched man, that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"¹⁸

As long as believers are in this life they will sin. This becomes clear from what Paul says in 7:25b. For though Paul answers his own questions as to who will deliver him, he is keenly aware that this deliverance through Christ his Lord still lay in the future, for he goes on to say, "So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin." So, even, after his shout of thanksgiving, Paul realizes that his battle with sin will continue. The "I" will continue to be divided; the struggle between the renewed mind and the old flesh will not be over until the latter will be completely destroyed. This is not to deny that the believer has already been set free from the law of sin and death (8:2). But this should not be interpreted as a complete liberation from these two evils, for even Christians must die (I Thess. 4:10; I Cor. 15:26).

In 8:10 also we see that the paradox between flesh and Spirit of chapter 7 is continued, for "If Christ is in you," Paul says, "the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness." Although the reference is probably to the physical body which as such is not evil, it is nevertheless the body with its members or organs which services as a vehicle of sin. This body is said to be dead because of sin; it carries within it the seed of sin and decay. In other words, no good is to be expected from this body in this life. It is dead "because the Christian is still as flesh a member of the first Adam — dead towards God, dead in sin, heading for death; . . . [it is] the same 'body of death' for deliverance from which he longs in 7:24. But the Christian *also*, at the time, has the Spirit, also shares the life of the last Adam, the life-giving Spirit; as such he is alive towards God, dead to sin."¹⁹ As long as the Christian is in this life he will carry this "body of sin" with him. As Luther puts it in his inimitably vigorous way:

Paul, good man that he was, longed to be without sin, but to it he was chained. I too, in common with many others, long to stand outside it, but this cannot be. We belch forth the vapours of sin; we fall into it, rise up again, buffet and torment ourselves night and day; but, since we are confined in this flesh, since we have to bear about with us everywhere this stinking sack, we cannot rid ourselves completely of it, or even knock it senseless. We make vigorous attempts to do so, but the old Adam retains his power until he is deposited in the grave.²⁰

That the deliverance from "the body of this death" is indeed a future event is taught throughout Romans 8. True, the believer is completely delivered from the condemning power of sin in the here and now (v. 1). He is also liberated from sin's dominion in this life (v. 2). But as far as indwelling sin is concerned, it is here to stay until the Christian's last breath. But this fact should not unduly depress us. There is a better day coming. After carefully distinguishing between saved and unsaved, and teaching us how we may prove our regeneration by our desire and determination to "mortify the deeds of the body" (v. 13), and our obedience to the Spirit (v. 14), which should result in assurance of faith (v. 16), the apostle goes on to hold before us the comforting and encouraging promise of our glorious deliverance which will take place at the last day when our bodies will be raised from the dead. To this day not only believers, but the whole creation looks forward with great anticipation. For then God's people will receive the "adoption, to wit, the redemption of [their] body" (v. 23). That this full redemption is still to come appears also from what Paul says in vv. 24, 25: "For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it." Meanwhile, believers continue to groan within themselves on account of indwelling sin as well as other trials and afflictions. And so they live out their days, "sorrowful, yet always rejoicing" (II Cor. 6:10), crying, "O wretched man that I am!" but in the same breath, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

The Christian lives in the tension of "the times between," and the paradox of the "already-not yet." To put it another way, "the believer is caught between fulfilment and consummation: he lives in the overlap of the ages, where the new age of resurrection life has already begun, but the old age of existence in the flesh has not yet ended, where the final work of God has begun in him but is not yet completed" (Phil. 1:6).²¹

That this tension between the "already" and the "not yet" is very basic to a proper understanding of the whole New Testament is generally recognized since O. Cullman first introduced this helpful exegetical insight. But what has not been sufficiently realized is what this principle means for the believer in his struggle between flesh and Spirit. As Dunn says, "Only when we have begun to appreciate how the Christian stands in relation to the flesh and to death in Paul's thought, only then will we begin to appreciate how deeply Romans 7:14-25 is embedded in Paul's soteriology and how clearly it reflects his understanding of Christian experience."²²

The Struggle is toward Victory

The believer is related to both ages: the age to come and the old age of sin. By faith he has been incorporated into Christ. He has been put to death, buried, raised, and now sits in heavenly places in Christ (Rom. 6:2-7; Col. 3:1-3; Eph. 2:5, 6). He is a

new creature: old things have passed away, all has become new (II Cor. 5:17). But the Christian is also still related to this old sinful and dying age. He must live in this same wicked world like everyone else; he has a sinful nature like every one else, and faces the same prospect of death as everyone else. Yet he is different from everyone else, because he understands that this age is doomed to destruction; he knows that "the fashion of this world passeth away" (I Cor. 7:31). He lives towards the new age and yearns for its full manifestation. Until that happy day will arrive he has to fight the good fight of faith. Though he loses many a battle against the devil, the world and his own flesh, he knows that he cannot lose the war. That war has already been won in principle. That is why the cry of frustration (not despair!), "O, wretched man that I am!" is always followed, and at times even preceded by the shout of victory: "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord," because "we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us" (8:37). "Yes," says R. Murray M'Cheyne,

we can give thanks before the fight is done. Even in the thickest of the battle we can look up to Christ, and cry, Thanks to God. The moment a soul groaning under corruption rests the eye on the Lord Jesus, that moment his groans are changed into songs of praise. In Christ you discover a fountain to wash away the guilt of all your sins. In Christ you discover grace sufficient for you — grace to hold you up in the end — and a sure promise that sin shall soon be rooted out altogether. . . . How often a Psalm begins with groans, and ends with praises! This is the daily experience of all the Lord's people. Is it yours? Try yourselves by this. If you know not the believer's song of praise, you will never cast your crowns with them at the feet of the Lamb. Dear believers, be content to glory in your infirmities that the power of Christ may rest upon you. Glory, glory, glory to the Lamb!²³

FOOTNOTES

1. Charles Hodge, *Commentary on Romans*, p. 240.
2. Archibald Alexander, *Thoughts on Religious Experience*, pp. 129-130.
3. James D. G. Dunn, "Romans 7:14-25 in the Theology of Paul," in *Present Truth*, June 1977, p. 43.
4. Herman Ridderbos, *Paul*, p. 130.
5. Anthony Hoekema, *The Christian Looks at Himself*, p. 62.
6. Ridderbos, *Ibid.*, p. 129.
7. Dunn, *Ibid.*, p. 44.
8. Hoekema, *Ibid.*, p. 64.
9. Ridderbos, *Ibid.*, p. 128.
10. Donald McLeod, "Luther and Calvin on the Place of the Law," in *The Westminster Conference*, 1974, p. 9.
11. Steele and Thomas, *Romans, An Interpretive Outline*, p. 56.
12. Calvin, *Commentary on Romans*, p. 149.
13. John Murray, *Commentary on Romans*, Vol. I, p. 260.
14. G. C. Berkouwer, *Faith and Sanctification*, pp. 59-60.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 63.
16. Horatius Bonar, *God's Way of Holiness*, p. 93.
17. Wm. S. Plumer, *Commentary on Romans*, p. 345.
18. Arthur Pink, *The Christian in Romans 7*, p. 6.
19. Dunn, *Ibid.*, p. 47.
20. Luther, cited by Robert D. Brinsmead in *Present Truth*, p. 41.
21. Dunn, *Ibid.*, p. 48.
22. *Ibid.*
23. Andrew Bonar, *Memoirs and Remains of Robert Murray M'Cheyne*, p. 434.

LESSONS FROM I PETER



REV. HENRY VANDER KAM

Lessons 7 and 8 on I Peter by Rev. Henry Vander Kam, pastor of the Christian Reformed Church, Lake Worth, Florida, are in this issue.

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LESSON 7

I Peter 2:11-17

Urging a life of good works

As was the custom of Paul in all of his writings, so Peter also first emphasizes basic teachings and then urges his readers to live a life which corresponds to these teachings and flows out of them. This is the only proper method.

Philosophy of life determines ethics; doctrine determines the way of life. Doctrinal purity cannot stand by itself but calls for a manner of life which is in harmony with it. The profession of faith by a church or an individual is tested by the life which is lived. Here too, the words of our Savior are applicable, "By their fruits ye shall know them." The life of good works which the author urges upon his readers must be the natural result of their living relationship to the Christ Who has bought them.

An authoritative word — They are the beloved of God and therefore are loved by the Apostle even though he may not know them personally. The bond which binds them together because they are bound to Christ is much stronger than any human bond. Peter "beseeches" them to listen carefully to what he has to say and to obey his authoritative word. He speaks lovingly but firmly. The things he is about to teach them are not to be taken as advice which may be heeded or rejected, but are the words of God

to them. He is, of course, not only "serving" the church, he comes with authority.

As "sojourners and pilgrims" — They must, first of all, remember the relationship in which they stand to the present world together with all its problems and difficulties. They are "sojourners and pilgrims." Their fatherland is not here. Seeing this is their position, they do not feel at home here.

Yet, this fact makes the life of the believer so difficult. He is called upon to be a leaven in this world. He must influence this world for good in all areas of life. This makes it difficult to define the proper Christian attitude to this world. The readers, and all Christians ever after, must keep in mind the very delicate balance they must maintain in their relationship to the world. This is not their "home" — but they "live here." They are "foreigners" but must make a greater contribution to the world than any "native."

"Abstain from fleshly lusts." — Specifically the Apostle warns them "to abstain from fleshly lusts." These are the influences of the present world which appeal to the body. These temptations may take various forms. There are those influences which can at once be identified as sinful. Others are more insidious.

The readers are to realize that the believer is not immune to these lusts of the flesh. Here, in the body, they have everything in common with the world in which they live. Nothing human is foreign to them. But, they must be aware of the fact that these "fleshly lusts" war against the soul! Their spiritual welfare can be jeopardized by the lusts of the flesh. Giving in to the lusts of the flesh can destroy the soul.

Blameless conduct — They are called to live "seemly" among the Gentiles. Theirs is to be a blameless conduct among unbelievers. They are living among people who do not listen to the *teaching* of the gospel of Christ, but who look closely at the *manner of life* of those who confess that they are His followers.

So much depends on the behavior of those to whom Peter is writing. Their manner of life must be beyond reproach, it must be beautiful!

God's people are indeed a gazing stock. The world watches them closely to see if there is something to the faith they profess. They often speak evil of the people of God. They accused the people of that day of many evils in connection with the celebration of the Lord's Supper. They spoke evil of them because they would not worship the emperor. Such, and other accusations are understandable because the believers were "different" and an irritant in the community.

Influence upon others — However, let the believers live a life of good works and the influence of such a life will be seen among the Gentiles. It will reveal to them that you have something which they do not possess. They will glorify God because of your good

works. Jesus teaches the same thing in Matthew 5:16: "Even so let your light shine before men; that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven." They will glorify God in the day of visitation, i.e., either when He comes to convert them to Himself, or when He comes with His judgments upon them.

So important is the manner of life of the readers that it will have eternal significance for themselves as well as for those among whom they live. Should they give in to the "fleshly lusts," their own souls would suffer greatly and it would turn the Gentiles even farther away from the God Who is speaking through you!

Subjection to human rulers — The believer recognizes Jesus as his King and the Word of God as his law. What must his attitude be to human rulers? Paul has dealt with this problem in Romans 13 and Peter calls attention to it here because it is such an important issue and one which will color their whole manner of life.

Conceivably, the readers might conclude that their allegiance to King Jesus frees them from all other authority. But, both Paul and Peter emphasize the need of subjecting ourselves to all human authority. This is not contradicting our allegiance to Christ because human authority is willed by God and He has ordained it. They are, therefore, to be subject to every human authority for the Lord's sake. In the various spheres in which they operate they are to be obeyed. God has laid down His laws for human life and men have been given authority to carry out these laws. They do not bring worship to the emperor because only God is entitled to worship. However, they are to be subject to the emperor as emperor! His is the highest office in the realm. They must be obedient to him as the servant of God! They must be obedient to him even though he is a pagan! The office must be honored regardless who holds the office.

Not only must the supreme authority in the realm be obeyed but also all others whom he sends to carry out his commands. Governors come in the name of the emperor and are therefore also to be obeyed. Government has been instituted for the purpose of punishing evil-doers so that a peaceful life may be possible for others. If those who trample on human law and the rights of others would go unpunished, human life would be impossible. It may be that there were instances of praising the law-abiding in that day (end of verse 14), but, generally, government punishes evil-doers and leaves the law-abiding alone. This is praise enough.

To silence the accusers — To do the right may be expected of the people of God. Let them be taught the right, and the obedient children of God will seek to do it. By their well-doing they will stop the mouths of the Gentiles. These unbelievers accuse the believers of many things in their ignorance. They do not know the truth; they will not be taught the truth; but, nevertheless, bring accusations. This is the work

of foolish men in their ignorance! These are to be put to shame and their mouths are to be stopped by the readers' manner of life. Surely, no more powerful and effective way can be found to overthrow the accusations of the unbeliever.

As free men — If they are to be subject to every ordinance of man to be obedient to the emperor and all those who speak in his name, what becomes of the freedom which they have in Christ?

That freedom has been emphasized in the New Testament time and again. Christ taught them that if the Son would make them free they would be free indeed. Paul contrasts the bondage under the old dispensation with the freedom which they may now enjoy in Jesus Christ. Christ had come to fulfill the law for them. What is the nature of that freedom if they are now to be subjected to all authority? This is a crucial question and may appear difficult to answer. There are still those who seemingly have never experienced the freedom which Christ has come to bring. Others are so intrigued by "Christian liberty" that they have virtually no conception of sin. Peter would have them avoid both extremes.

They must live as free men. They may not live as though Christ had not come. This is a freedom from the bondage of sin. It is a freedom from the touch-not, taste-not and handle-not of previous times. It is a freedom to serve God without an intermediary. It is a freedom to begin to live according to all His commandments. But, this freedom may not be used as a "cloak of wickedness" as though anything is allowable to the believer! No, he listens even more carefully to the law than the Old Testament believer did. From this law he receives the knowledge of sin but also the rule for gratitude. In the name of Christian freedom he may not do deeds of wickedness! He has indeed been made free — but is the bond-servant of God! So only can he be free. In the proper relation to his God he is able to live as a free man. His only comfort is that he belongs to his faithful Savior and is not his own. This is the only light in which the freedom of believers can be understood. The believing acceptance of the first question and answer of the Heidelberg Catechism safeguards the believer against many of the pitfalls of life and is his only comfort.

Duties toward God and men — The Apostle ends this section with several brief and pithy statements. They are to honor all men. Men are made in the image of God and therefore have a certain dignity which must be honored. Paul has become a debtor to Greeks and Barbarians (Rom. 1:14). They must also love the brotherhood, i.e., all believers. There are those among believers who may not be so lovable, but, the things you have in common are so many and so great that nothing may hinder the love relationship which binds you together. You are to fear God. This includes love for and obedience to the God who has spoken to them and has sent His Son for them. This fear of God is basic to all other relationships. They

must also honor the king or emperor as he instructed them previously.

If believers obey these instructions they will live a life of good works which glorifies God and will live a life of freedom in Christ.

Questions for discussion:

1. How can we do justice to our calling as the salt of the earth seeing we are but sojourners and pilgrims here? How can we keep the proper balance between the two?
2. How do we influence the unbelieving world more, by our words or by our lives? How must the two be related? Which comes first?
3. When must we obey God rather than men? In which area of life may this principle be used?
4. May we refuse to obey human authority when we are called to participate in what we deem to be an unjust war? Explain.
5. What is Christian liberty? What are its boundaries?

LESSON 8

I Peter 2:18-25

Obedience for slaves

It is indeed remarkable how many times the New Testament addresses words of instruction to slaves. Paul gives such instruction in Ephesians, Colossians, First Timothy, and Titus; and the Apostle Peter refers to this matter in these verses. It is also noteworthy that the *institution* of slavery is not attacked directly but that advice is given to the slaves as to the manner of their conduct.

Paul addresses words of warning to the masters too, but Peter mentions the slaves only. We must remember that a large part of the population was in slavery at this particular time. Rome had conquered the world and enslaved people of the conquered nations. The gospel of Jesus Christ also has a message for the slaves of that time.

A Christian duty — The type of slave to whom the Apostle addresses these words were the household slaves of that time. These were the ones who came in close contact with their masters every day because they were directly under them. He tells them to be subject to such masters with all fear. These people were free in Christ but must now subject themselves to heathen masters. This did not seem logical to many of them. Why must they be subjected to anyone seeing they have the glorious freedom in Christ? They only are free men and the Apostle now seems to bring them back to bondage.

Not only are they to be subject because no other attitude is possible, they are to be obedient with all fear. They are to honor them for the position they have received of their Lord. God is also in control

over all human relationships. He has caused one to have the place of a master and another the place of a slave. If the latter position is your lot you are to submit. This would not be so difficult to do toward masters who were good and kind but it becomes very difficult to show honor to those who are unreasonable. Yet, that is their calling. They must submit to those who demand the impossible. That is their Christian duty!

Unbelievers can submit to the good and gentle masters, but it is a Christian virtue to be truly subject to the unkind. A man can only do this if he lives out of an entirely different principle than the world does. Because, they must do it from the heart — as before the face of God. If they do this sincerely they will have the divine approval. There God sees His grace revealed and at work! They may be called upon to endure griefs and to suffer wrongfully but are to do so for His sake.

The slaves often tried to escape their bondage. Others stole from their masters. Disobedience was very common. Such behavior was usually punished very severely. If Christian slaves were guilty of any of these things they would have deserved punishment. If they would submit patiently to such punishment they might already be quite different from the other slaves. However, they would not be able to glory in this kind of patience because they were deserving of punishment. But, when they do well, when they seek the master's welfare and when they give no reason for disapproval, *and then suffer for it*, this reveals the grace of God. This goes contrary to all human feelings. To be criticized and punished for doing the good goes contrary to every sense of justice. When Jesus tells His followers that they must be ready to deny themselves in order to follow Him, He comes with a revolutionary teaching! Who is sufficient to this? God's grace alone makes it possible.

Christ's example — You have been called to this manner of life, says Peter. You have been converted, i.e., you have been turned around! That which you once esteemed highly has become but refuse, and the things which you once despised have become very dear.

No other leader or teacher has ever called his disciples the way Jesus has done. Christ not only taught them, He suffered for them. His suffering was greater than has ever been endured by anyone. He suffered in body and soul. The agony of the physical suffering in the crucifixion can be understood in part but the soul suffering to which He gave voice by crying out: My God, My God! why hast thou forsaken Me? can never be understood. He suffered these things *for you!* This has given you an example to follow. He and His work were far more than an example but they are also an example! This example was given so that you might follow in His steps. With these words the Apostle teaches the readers to follow the example of Christ.

These are the words which have been used much

in the history of the people of God and often in such a way as to rob them of their Scriptural meaning. Who can follow in His steps? Who can walk with God? Enoch did! But the connection in which these words are written shows us clearly that it is not the kind of walk celebrated in poetry, but that it is a walk through difficult places! To follow in His steps — those steps go through Gethsemane and to Golgotha! We get renewed respect for the words of the Psalmist: “Thy way was in the sea, and thy paths in the great waters, and thy footsteps were not known” (Ps. 77:19). Although His example is difficult to follow and His steps difficult to walk in, the readers are called to do so. To be able to do this they will have to keep the eye of faith fixed on the Christ Who has given Himself for them.

The Apostle therefore calls the attention of the readers to the way in which the Christ has conducted Himself at the time He was giving Himself for them. He did not sin. No one was able to convict Him of sin. False witnesses brought false accusations because they could find no fault in Him. He was the sinless One and so only could He deliver others from sin. No sin was found in His person and He did not sin with His lips. He did not deceive by His speech. He did not utter half-truths. He did not seek to defend Himself in this way.

He was reviled as a dangerous criminal. They even spat in His face. They charged Him with “crimes beyond compare.” They nailed Him to a cross to show their utter contempt. But, He did not revile in return. He did not repay in kind. He was silent when accused before Pilate and Herod. This One, Who had such power of speech did not use this power to defend Himself. When He suffered, and He suffered greatly, He did not threaten them. He could have threatened them with all the legions of heaven, but that was not proper. No, He committed these things to Him Who judges righteously. He did not do this in order to call down the vengeance of God on those evil-doers who were reviling Him and causing Him to suffer. No, He prays: Father forgive them for they know not what they do. He simply gave it into the proper hands — into the hands of Him to Whom judgment belongs. This judgment did not belong to Him at this stage — He was to be obedient to the One Who had sent Him!

What an “example” the Christ thus becomes for those who are now in slavery! He bore far greater hardship than they. They may suffer for well-doing — He was reviled and cursed as the sinless One. What was His reaction? He suffered willingly and in perfect obedience! Follow that example! Walk in His steps! Difficult? Of course, but — possible! You have been born anew. The life you now live is His!

Possible in and through Christ — So many have considered Christ to be only an example for others to follow. He would be an impossible example if He did no more for His followers. He becomes our example only after He has done His saving work. This

fact is now clearly taught. He Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree. Here the substitutionary atonement is clearly taught. He took all the sins of His people upon Himself. He became sin for us, says Paul. He was given a body so that He might be able to do this. He bore them on the tree — He bore the curse for us. That sin is done away, the bill is fully paid. But, nothing else would do. Man’s sin was so great that it took the life of the Son of God — so great my sin and misery is!

Seeing that Christ has paid the debt completely we have now died to sin and live to righteousness. Through the work of Christ such a change has been wrought in His people that they are no longer the same. They have now died to that in which they once lived and live to that which they did not even know existed! That is, therefore, the difference between the believing slave and the unbelieving slave. Those attitudes which are impossible to the unbeliever are now the delight of the believer. The kind of obedience to which the writer had called them in the beginning of this section has been made possible through their union with Christ.

By the stripes or wounds of Christ they have been healed. The stripes which they themselves endure have no healing power but His wounds do. The suffering of Christ was once for all. Never will they have to suffer the way Christ did. He bore it willingly, patiently, and obediently. Thereby have you been healed. You have been healed of all sicknesses of body and soul. You have been healed so that no debt is still laid to your charge. His healing has brought complete salvation! Therefore you should suffer patiently and gladly to glorify Him Who has redeemed you.

Before you came to the true faith in the Christ of God you were going astray like sheep, helpless, and having no defence against powers which would destroy you. But you were turned around and have come under the guidance and protection of the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls. The readers had been turned from straying aimlessly to perfect safety. Here they will be protected and fed. It may have seemed to them that the demands Christ placed on them were virtually impossible — they will now realize that His commands are not grievous. Indeed, He demands everything — but He gives the ability to offer everything.

Questions for discussion:

1. What does the New Testament’s attitude toward slavery teach us in seeking to solve social problems?
2. Must a Christian always suffer wrong? Does he have no rights? Discuss.
3. In which ways is Christ our example? In which ways is He not?
4. What is involved in being a follower of Christ? Can we walk in His steps?
5. What does conversion accomplish?

WITNESS OR CONFESS?

PETER DE JONG

"Witnessing"

There appears among our churches a growing concern for evangelism. One can only welcome efforts of church members to speak up for Christ wherever He gives them the opportunity to do so. Such activity is commonly being called "witnessing" and our churches are in various ways encouraging such "personal witnessing." While the activity is to be appreciated, a study of the Bible's use of the words "witness" and "witnessing" suggests that our use of them for our evangelistic activity is at least questionable. It may both express and encourage some confused thinking about what we are really doing and called to do.

Consulting a concordance will show that the words in the Bible which are translated "witness" refer to the giver or giving of testimony as in a courtroom of what one has seen as an "eye-witness." Exactly as in our usage of such words today, they refer to people who were present and saw what happened and therefore can be called to give evidence from personal observation of what the facts were in a matter which may be disputed. Such witnesses (1) must have been on the scene to see and hear what happened and (2) must in giving their evidence confine themselves to facts, not embroider them with guesses or impressions or expressions of their own feelings. It seems to me that in our talk of evangelistic "witnessing" this is being lost from sight. In this authentic or biblical sense of the word we are not and cannot be "witnesses" of the gospel for we were not there when the events took place.

The real and proper witnesses were the people who were on the scene. The clearest delineation of the role of those real "witnesses" is that given by the Apostle Peter when preaching the gospel in the house of Cornelius (Acts 10:39-43). "And we are witnesses of all things which he did . . . Him God raised up the third day, and gave him to be made manifest, not to all the people, but unto witnesses that were chosen before of God, even to us, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. And he charged us to preach unto the people, and to testify that this is he who is ordained of God to be the Judge of the living and the dead. To him bear all the prophets witness, that through his name every one that believeth on him shall receive remission of sins." Although the prophets "witness" might not seem to qualify as such "eye-witnesses' testimony" we must not forget that Peter in his first letter (I Peter 1:11) explained that "the Spirit of Christ which was in them . . . testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that should follow them." It is apparent in this whole passage as in many others throughout the Bible that the emphasis in the word "witness" is on giving direct testimony by one who was on the scene, especially by those who had walked and talked with the Lord after His resurrection.

In this direct and proper sense of the word later believers in Christ are not and cannot be "witnesses." We are called and led to believe in Him on the testimony of others. Thomas, one of the original "witnesses" was told, "Because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed" (John 20:29). And Peter had to write such believers who had not been direct witnesses, "whom not having seen ye love; on whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice greatly with joy unspeakable and full of glory: receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls" (I Peter 1:8, 9).

"Confessing"

If our duty as believers is not in the strict and proper sense of the word to "witness," what is it? It is, in the Bible's expression, to "confess." That word means, literally, "to say with" someone else. Who is the "someone" with whose words we are to agree? Is it the "apostle" such as Peter who was a first-hand "witness"? It is more than that. Consider the illuminating explanation of this point in I John 5:7, 9-12. "It is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is the truth." "If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater; for the witness of God is this, that he hath born witness concerning his Son. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in him: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he hath not believed in the witness that God hath borne concerning his Son. And the witness is this, that God gave unto us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath the life; he that hath not the Son of God hath not the life." In other words our "confessing" is properly "saying with" God what He has said through the "testimony" of His witnesses.

The Bible's Words Are Important

Are our use of such words as "witnessing" and "confessing" important enough to be worth discussing? As long as one believes in and tries to speak for Christ, does it matter how he regards and does that speaking? I believe that it does matter. Especially in our times a preoccupation with people's feelings and impulses is displacing concern about God's Word and its teachings or "doctrines." Our women's liberation champions are frankly telling the churches that they should be less concerned about Bible exegesis and pay more attention to what the Spirit is saying through the convictions and demonstrated abilities of their women members.

If the church is to escape the hopeless confusion into which such subjectivistic control by personal impulses and sentiments threatens to engulf it, it will have to look much more closely than we have often been in the habit of doing at what God in His Word has said His gospel is and at the way He has said that He wants it to be believed, obeyed and brought to the world. Only the clarity of His inspired Scriptures can deliver us and our labors from the confusion of our times. ●

A GIANT OF FAITH FALLING INTO SIN



REV. JOHN BLANKESPOOR

And Gideon made an ephod thereof and put it in his city, even in Ophrah, and all Israel played the harlot after it there, and it became a snare unto Gideon and his house. Judges 8:27

What a giant of faith this man had been! With his small band, without any equipment for warfare, he "risked" his life. And by faith conquered the mighty Midianites numbering some 135,000 people. In faith they went out with the assurance that God would help them. Therefore they had one theme in their song of victory, "The Sword of the Lord and of Gideon." But they had no swords of their own; God was their sword.

Scripture emphasizes what God has done and will do as the Faithful One. He is the faithful covenant-keeping God. The name Jaweh, or Jehovah which stresses this is used more than 9000 times in the O.T. Again and again and again the church is reminded of His steadfastness, everlasting mercies and faithful promises and that she must therefore trust only in Him. And as a result we must say everyday, Ebenezer, hitherto the Lord has been with us.

When we look into the future we are often anxious and worried. But God says, "Look back and you will see My faithfulness." The implication is that when the people of God see this faithfulness and love of God in the past, together with His glorious promises, this truth must determine their attitude and course of action for the present and the future. It must make them trust and obey.

Remember therefore always what God has done for you in the past. Then trust in His promises and strength for the future. This Gideon understood.

After the battle the people returned with the enthusiasm of victory. They were on cloud nine. Under the leadership of this mighty man they felt confident of continued guidance in the future. They offered to him and his sons the throne of kingship. All this popularity was short-lived. Within a few decades immediately after the death of Gideon their "hero" they allowed Abimelech to kill 70 sons of Gideon. Only one escaped. How they wanted him to be their king. He had delivered them. But the name of God was not

even mentioned and apparently had already been forgotten. They saw only the man Gideon. But don't be too harsh with these people. Don't we often act in the same way, after having been shown and having experienced marvelous blessings of this faithful God?

One sin leads to greater ones. In the next verse we read of Gideon requesting that they give to him their jewelry so that he could make an ephod.

An Ephod was a vestment, some kind of garb or robe worn by high priests. Attached to it was also what was called the Urim and Thummim. Exactly what this was we do not know, except that it was a God-given means to inform Israel of His will for the future. This purpose made the ephod very important. When, for example, David time and again enquired of the Lord what the Lord wanted him to do, the answer likely was given through the high priest with the Urim and Thummim. Through it the will of the Lord could be sought in times of crises; it foretold the future; it could reliably inform the judges of the guilt or innocence of accused people and give the approval or disapproval of the Lord.

But why did Gideon want such an ephod at this time? The people desired even more than an ephod. They had not forgotten the difficulties of the past. If only they would have had a good king all this would not have happened. Therefore they would now prepare for the future by making Gideon their king. Gideon refused their request, answering that God was their king. But possibly he also said something like this: "Even though God is and was our king, we don't know how the heavenly king will lead us, what His plans are concerning us for the future. We don't know into what circumstances He will bring us. We must know the plans of our God. We must be able to ask Him directly, as often as possible. We need an ephod." Quite probably Gideon had good intention, but the results were that the ephod became a real trap to him and the people.

Why? What wrong did he do that brought his downfall? First of all he was in this act forsaking the worship of God in the Divinely-ordained manner. Hadn't the Lord given them the tabernacle at Shiloh with the sacrifices and the God-ordained priests, the Urim and Thummim? God wanted the Israelites to worship Him there, according to His God-given means and instructions. There they could find the mighty God of whom Gideon and the people had spoken in battle on that memorable night. To Shiloh they had to go; there they could find Christ and receive grace to trust in the Lord's strength and mercies.

But now Shiloh and God's priests were not even mentioned. Shiloh has fallen into the background, as well as the tabernacle with the priests. Gideon was the man of the hour. In him the people placed their trust for the future. If someone would have asked those people if they were believers, confessing the

name of Jehovah, they surely would have given a positive reply. But at the same time they wanted something tangible and visible for the future, and they found this in Gideon and the ephod. No one seems to talk about the marvelous deliverance of the past which was given by simple direct trust in the Lord and His mercies.

Gideon's big mistake was that he bound the church of God to himself and separated it from God and His promises.

Be sure to take inventory of yourself before you begin to criticize this great man of God. Who is the hope of Christians in all circumstances? We all know the answers to such "simple" questions. But at the same time we, too, want something tangible, physical. Then we don't need quite as much faith. Surely the Lord wants us to use the means He has given us, but they must never become an end in themselves, so that we trust in them. We need pastors, but don't make gods of them, or trust in them instead of God. We need money, but don't trust in it instead of the Lord and His faithful mercies. We need doctors, but don't rely upon them instead of the Lord. And so we can go on and on. It just seems easier when we too have something tangible, which we see and touch. And the Lord always wants that faith that believes and trusts, though not seeing or understanding.

Gideon had one ephod. We may have many of them, in which we put our confidence for the future. And it's so easy to do, it comes so "natural." Look again at Gideon, what a giant of faith in the time of crisis, and yet now, when it was peaceful he fell into this sin.

All men fail. All of them, except Jesus Christ. He always trusted in God alone, and in doing so made the perfect sacrifice. Paul tells us that if God has given us so much in the gift of His Son, won't He give us all things, everything, absolutely everything that is good with Him!

May we learn to trust and obey Him and rely only on His promises and strength. ●

angry women

JELLE TUININGA

One becomes accustomed nowadays to reading a lot of outlandish nonsense about women's rights and women's ordination, and most of the time it's best to shrug one's shoulders and smile a bit. Many columnists and newswriters betray their total ignorance of biblical norms.

One would expect something different, however, when the writer is a confessed Christian and he or she is writing in a magazine whose professed sin is to

give a biblical presentation on matters discussed. Sad to say, one's expectations are often put to shame. Here too, the children of light are often more foolish than the children of this world.

I was reminded of this when I read an article by Mrs. Claire K. Wolterstorff in the August '78 issue of *Reformed Journal* about a conference of evangelical women held in Pasadena, California. Approximately 800 women came together to listen, sing, dance and "to receive communion served by a woman." (Aside from the fact that having communion at these conferences is an un-Reformed practice, it seems that having it served by a woman added a special touch to it.) The purpose of the Conference was to "share a common concern for the role of women in evangelical Christianity today."

What is further written about this Conference is not my concern right now. I only want to focus on a couple of statements made by Mrs. Wolterstorff in this article. She says: "My acute frustration and anger at being an unskilled, inept, untapped, and isolated woman in a denomination that does not give me the opportunity to become a skilled leader — ah skilled as my gifts will allow — was dissipated somewhat by the feeling that I was caught up in a tide that was flowing and would not ebb." A bit later, after having expressed the wish that Catholic women had been there too, since they "are together working for the ordination of women to the priesthood," she writes: "We Protestant lay women are becoming angrier and angrier from continued exclusion or grudging acceptance; we don't want to be welcomed in as drudges, kitchen workers, secretaries, and teachers only." In other words, we want to be accepted as ordained elders and ministers.

What to say about this type of writing? I call it secular nonsense. How a Christian woman can write such nonsense in a Reformed magazine beats me.

If Mrs. Wolterstorff, and others with her, feel "unskilled, inept, untapped and isolated," then she has no one else than herself to blame. And if she thinks that the "magic touch" of ordination is suddenly going to change all that, she better think again.

In my ministry I know many beautiful, happy, skilled and involved women who serve the Lord joyfully in the church and kingdom of Jesus Christ, alongside of serving Him as full-time mothers and home-makers. They are wonderful contented women, who aren't seeking ordination and don't feel one bit angry about not being ordained. And they don't consider themselves second-class church members either. These women, along with their husbands, are the backbone of the church of Jesus Christ. What a blessing to have such women. How sad that Mrs. Wolterstorff and others are missing out on such blessings.

The Preacher says: "Woe to you, O land, when your king is a child." I say: Woe to you, O church, when your leaders are unhappy, frustrated, angry women. ●

reformed women speak

what is

"Progress"?

LAURIE VANDEN HEUVEL

(II)

In our last article we saw that what some see as "progress" in the CRC, others label as alarming "regress." We noted that a basic incompatibility on the doctrine of the *authority of Scripture* was responsible for disturbing decisions and positions taken by the CRC in recent days.

The focus of controversy at this year's Synod centered on women, and since we are women, it is appropriate that we should observe and reflect carefully upon the deliberations of the Synod of 1978. It was both a privilege and a heartache for me to be an observer at this Synod to which my husband was a delegate. I will attempt to share with you an accurate recall of statements and actions done in these sessions.

Although both sides of the issue of women in ecclesiastical office (1) (women deacons and (2) a women applicant for candidacy in the ministry) publicly declared a desire to be true to the Word of God, there was a sharp difference on just what the Word *is* and *says*. Although both sides claimed the Spirit's guidance, one side steadfastly maintained that the Spirit speaks *through His Word*. They quoted many passages which spoke directly to the issue of women in ecclesiastical office and also offered comments of renowned Reformed scholars on these passages from commentaries. To my disappointment, the other side rather consistently *ignored* all references to Scripture, pleading rather on existential grounds such as the "gifts" of many women and the *need* for their services in the church. When they did refer to the Scripture passages in question, they pointed out that Reformed commentators saw these passages through the *bias* of the life-style of their own day and interpreted the Scriptures accordingly. Therefore, their comments recorded in their commentaries were no longer valid for today.

The proponents of women in ecclesiastical office pleaded for "permission" to ordain women. They pointed out that they were not urging all CRC churches to ordain their women. They only wanted the permission for themselves and for all who desire to do it. But they forget that we in the CRC are a *confessional church*, bound together by a Church

Order which declares that all decisions of Synod shall be considered "settled and binding." This means that women have Synodical authorization to *demand* nomination for and ordination to office regardless of whether or not the local consistory approves or disapproves. Once we let go the "binding" and "settled" character of the decisions of Synod (which many of us are going to have to do in the foreseeable future), we will become *congregational* (each church a law to itself).

After a lengthy discussion of these matters, a weary Synod took the vote on the issue of women deacons. The voice vote was too close to call so delegations were polled — four votes per classis. When all votes were counted, the President of Synod declared that the motion for women as deacons had passed — by *one* vote. From all over the gallery, people stood up, clapped and shouted, ecstatic over their apparent victory. But at the same time, a delegate from Classis California South rose to challenge the count of the chair. An electric silence came over the whole assembly and the President instructed the First Clerk to repeat his tally for each classis to confirm the count. A mistake was uncovered in the recording of the vote from Classis Columbia. First Clerk had written three "yes" and one "no" when actually the vote from that classis was two "yes" and two "no." The President announced that now the motion was defeated.

As many of us were breathing a sigh of thankfulness, preparing to leave the gallery, a most unexpected thing happened. The President of Synod announced that he would now entertain a motion that had been deferred to adopt the recommendation of the minority report. This was a recommendation that we ordain women as deacons *provided their work differed from that of elders and minister*. Opponents immediately jumped to their feet, reminding the President that this motion was basically the same as the motion which had just been defeated and was illegally before Synod since Dr. Bremer, the representative of the Synodical minority committee had stood up at the very outset of the afternoon's discussion and stated very plainly that the minority report committee *yielded* to the advisory committee's recommendation to ordain women to the office of deacon. This meant that the minority study committee report was *no longer an option for Synod*. But the President of Synod insisted it was legal and a voice vote from the body sustained him. During the discussion which followed, Synod was reminded that in our churches and also in our Church Order (Article 25) and the Belgic Confession (Article 30) the deacons are given *authority* (in addition to their work of mercy) along with elder and minister and therefore it would be difficult if not impossible to ordain women to a deacon's office which would carry no *authority of ruling* aspects in the CRC.

Nonetheless, women were given the right to be ordained to the office of deacon, the Church Order (Article 3) was changed *contrary* to its own rule which states in Article 47 that "No substantial altera-

tions shall be effected by Synod in these matters (namely the creeds, the Church Order, the liturgical forms, the Psalter Hymnal, and the principles and elements of the Order of Worship) *unless the churches have had prior opportunity to consider the advisability of the proposed changes*" (italics mine — LVH). There was no such opportunity for our CRC churches to reflect upon and express themselves on such a major change of policy. Hopefully many churches will protest the illegality of this year's Synodical decision and overture Synod to rescind this decision on the grounds that 1) it is contrary to the clear teaching of Scripture and 2) it was a decision taken contrary to Article 47 of the Church Order.

Synod of 1978 was also called upon to deal with another issue about which the CRC congregations had not been warned or advised — an overture from the Church of the Servant asking Synod to examine and declare for candidacy for the ordained ministry of Word and Sacrament in the CRC, a woman, Mrs. Marchiene Rienstra.

Discussion on this overture revealed some rather startling viewpoints. Synod was told for example, that Scripture must never be interpreted *apart* from a real, live case. Thus the *availability* of Marchiene Rienstra and her gifts *must color* our interpretation of Scripture passages which refer to women in ecclesiastical office.

Synod was repeatedly advised that we need "fresh movings of the Spirit among us" but no mention was made of the fact that the Spirit speaks *through* the Word of God and not *apart* from or *contrary* to it.

Synod was urged and even pressed by delegates and professors of Mrs. Rienstra to allow her to *speak* to the Synod, thus demonstrating to and convincing Synod of her special gifts. Other delegates countered by saying that her gifts had been amply endorsed by the Seminary faculty and the Board of Trustees and there was no need to *prove* the word of these bodies on this matter. Further, no other candidate was being allowed the privilege of the floor of Synod. Basic to the whole matter of course, is the fact that at the present time the CRC officially maintains that the Scriptures teach that the ministry of Word and Sacra-

men in the church is reserved for males only and the Church Order binds us to this position. To allow Mrs. Rienstra to speak is simply to *flirt* with something which the Scriptures and the Church Order clearly forbid.

The motion to allow Mrs. Rienstra to speak lost by a vote of 69 to 77.

Although the case for woman candidacy for the ministry of Word and Sacraments lost at this year's Synod, there were remarks made and attitudes displayed on the floor of Synod by outstanding leaders, including Seminary faculty advisers, that cast long dark shadows over the future.

There was a pervasive apologetic attitude toward Mrs. Rienstra as if the denomination was failing to grant something it *owed* to her.

There was expression of hope that the church would change its traditional interpretation of Scripture and subsequently change the Church Order so that Mrs. Rienstra and other qualified women might receive candidacy in the CRC.

The question, "What is progress?" is being answered two ways in the CRC. For those who adhere to "Position A" on Scripture, progress means an ongoing *application* of the principles of Scripture to the issues of the day. For those who adhere to "Position B," progress means an ongoing *adaptation* and *re-interpretation* of Scripture to fit the *needs* and *gifts* of the present day. These two positions cannot and will not ever mesh into one. It appears we are on a collision course in the CRC. May we all be fervant in prayer that *truth* may be established and *unity* on that truth achieved. ●

EDITOR'S NOTE:

We have been informed that the article on page 4 of the September issue entitled, "Are You Listening" was written by Harriet Van Groningen, not by Laurie Vanden Heuvel, the editor of that department. Harriet is the wife of Dr. Gerard Van Groningen, professor at the Reformed Theological Seminary, Jackson, Miss. We appreciate her contribution.

POINTED PARAGRAPHS

DENYING REPROBATION ATTACKS CHRIST'S ATONEMENT

I am becoming more and more convinced that some of the recent discussions about election and reprobation are in fact a very dangerous attack on the atonement of Christ. A number of writings of Dr. James Daane and Dr. Harry Boer particularly come to mind. When Dr. Daane writes, "The number of the elect has nothing to do with the nature of election, . . ." (*Banner*, April 7,

1978), he unmistakably drives a wedge between the *nature* of the atonement and the *extent* of the atonement. In another place he argues, "To make number, in the context of *individual* election, an essential feature of election is to make reprobation an inherent quality of election" (*The Freedom of God*, p. 137). One cannot speak of a definite, penal-substitutionary atonement and at the same time refuse to speak about the extent of the atonement (for whom Christ died) and about reprobation, unless one denies that definite atonement. We destroy the *nature* of the atonement when we refuse to speak at the same time of the *extent* of the atonement for

these two are inextricably bound to one another in the Biblical view of Christ's work (John 10). Christ died to make salvation *actual* for me and for every member of His church. Christ did not die simply to make salvation *possible* for an indefinite number of persons.

It is my position that when Dr. Boer argues against individual election and reprobation in Romans 9 in his Confessional-Revision Gravamen (*Acts of Synod*, 1977), he too is following the same line of thinking as Dr. Daane. This can only lead to an attack on the Biblical teaching of the atonement of Christ.

REV. RONALD SCHEVERS
Baldwin, Wisconsin



SYNOD REPORT UNFAIR?

August 28, 1978

THE OUTLOOK

Rev. Peter De Jong, *Editor*
Dutton, MI 49511
Box 34

Dear Rev. De Jong:

In the August, 1978 issue of THE OUTLOOK, page seven, it is reported that at the Synod of 1978 I spoke of my fervent desire that the church would very soon open the office of the ministry of the Word to women. Then the author of this report on synod offers the following observation: "It is amazing that two men from our seminary should come out so openly and forthrightly for a position which is so clearly opposed by Scripture on the ground of (sic) that woman is not to have authority over a man, and that she is to be in submission to him."

Taken in the context in which they were uttered, my remarks do not warrant the judgment quoted above. The context was an advisory committee recommendation (which I helped to formulate), as follows:

"That synod do not accede to the request of the Church of the Servant to take the necessary steps toward declaration of candidacy for Marchienne Rienstra.

Grounds:

- a. The church's present understanding of Scripture as reflected in the Church Order does not allow Synod to declare any woman a candidate.
- b. Any departure from the church's present position should come about by way of Scriptural study (such as is presently underway), and not by way of appeal to the gifts of an individual apart from the church's understanding of Scripture." (Cf. *Acts of Synod*, 1978, p. 109.)

I was speaking in response to a vigorous criticism of ground "b" above, and the burden of my remarks was that the church should not proceed in the direction requested unless it was con-

vinced of the biblical warrant for doing so. The article in THE OUTLOOK fails to recognize that I opposed the appeal and that this opposition was grounded on the insistence that the church must follow the Scriptures. Thus it leaves a false impression of my position, which I hope you will correct by the publication of these comments.

Sincerely,

J. H. KROMMINGA
President

Editorial Note: As recorded, this is what Dr. Kromminga actually said,

"Mr. Chairman, in addressing myself to these grounds I suppose one has to argue for the grounds in order to argue against the motion to delete them. There must be a reason for taking this action and the grounds intend to give that reason. Before I address myself directly to the grounds I want to reflect the personal dilemma that I myself have been in. Marchienne Rienstra is a very persuasive individual who has a way of convincing people just by being herself that she qualifies for the kind of special treatment that is proposed for her. In my position as administrator in the seminary this has caused me some very uneasy moments. And I would like to say that I should perfectly wish that the door were open for her to be a minister of the Word and Sacraments. And that I hope that that door will be open in the future—in the near future. The grounds however indicates a situation in which I find myself and which I think Synod find itself. We have the Church Order which has an article in it which the church has believed to be a reflection of Scripture. It's not given to us arbitrarily. We thought that's what Scripture said. We may be wrong about that. But the way to find out is to search the Scriptures and to make a decision whether that article in the Church Order does indeed reflect the Scripture or not and until that time we had better abide by it. And certainly in the present situation in which the fear on this issue has risen as high as it has. Whatever normal reason there is for abiding by the Church Order (and I think there is great reason for abiding by it a great deal better than we do) this is accentuated in the present situation. If the church is going to come to this kind of decision it ought to do so on the basis of some kind or argument or evidence which will lead us to say before the eyes of the Lord, 'We've been wrong all these years. Now we've got to change and we've got to change regardless of the consequences.' But until we have come to that kind of decision, we mustn't face those consequences and we mustn't make that kind of a change. And that's the argumentation that these grounds seek to present. If they are faulty in that respect, then amend them."

* * * *

The readers may judge for themselves whether the report on the Synod of this speech made a fair judgment.

MORE ABOUT QUOTAS

September 13, 1978

THE OUTLOOK

Letters to the Editor
6940 Hanna Lake Rd.
Dutton, MI 49511

Dear Editor:

I read with appreciation the article "Of Quotas, Qualms and Church Unity," by John R. Sittema (OUTLOOK, September 1978). One must applaud the thrust of the article; quotas are not assessments or taxations and conscientious stewardship is the responsibility of the membership in relation to its local consistory. This emphasis should be stoutly maintained in the decaying ecclesiastical situation and your past article on this subject should be republished (*Torch and Trumpet*, Nov. 1970).

There is, however, an erroneous impression created that II Toronto's decision to withhold some quotas was somehow connected to the "unique history" of the Toronto II Church. For Mr. Sittema to say, "Nothing in Classis Orange City's grounds seriously considered the unique history of the Toronto II case . . ." and again, "It should be clear to many that the Toronto II case is far more involved than just withholding quotas" is to distort the episode.

The implications of these statements are contrary to fact. The decision of the Toronto church to withhold some quotas was not connected in any substantive way with the "unique history" of doctrinal aberrations II Toronto was forced to live through and deal with. The "unique history" did nothing more than create a keener and earlier awareness of the growing apostasy in the Christian Reformed Church. Because of circumstances forced upon it, the consistory in Toronto was perhaps more diligent than appears to have been the case with other consistories. It is for this reason that the decision in Toronto antedates the parallel decision of a church in Classis Orange City by three years.

Further, Toronto's consistory was aware, at the time of its decision, that other churches were essentially withholding certain quotas. They were, however, using more questionable methods, such as not paying certain quotas or placing them in the budget, but giving opportunity to the membership to contribute by taking free-will offerings for the rejected causes. These consistories acted only as a transmitting agency but assumed no responsibility for the quota. Other consistories excused objecting members from paying certain quotas they considered offensive. II Toronto could also have used these or other methods to escape paying certain quotas; however, the consistory considered these means objectionable. It was for that reason that its grievances were publicly stated to Synod and the Synodical scolding was subsequently issued.

The conclusion of Sittema's article is correct: "But even more significantly the underlying premise of the adopted rec-

ommendation is clearly an unbiblical one. It is that the unity of the Church as it comes to expression in fellowship or membership in this denomination is at heart a financial one." This is the tragedy of Synod's scolding and Classis Orange City's endorsement of it. The church has lost the ability to respect the local autonomy of the churches and the ability to hear the conscientious protests of her children.

The unwarranted impression of the article should be corrected, Mr. Editor, because many godfearing members of II Toronto have often been abused and misrepresented, both intentionally and I am sure, unintentionally by erroneous information. I do not presume to know how the Lord used or intends to use the unique history of II Toronto. The decision, however, to withhold some quotas was not an outgrowth of that history but a conscientious protest against the denomination's growing apostasy.

Cordially,

JOHN J. BYKER



DE DINGEN DIE ONS VAN GOD GESCHONKEN ZIJN. Catechism Sermons on the 52 Lord's Days of the Heidelberg Catechism. Author B. Holwerda. Reviewed by John De Pater, Escalon, California.

This book of sermons will become of great value to Reformed Christians in

America with its forthcoming translation in the English language to be published by the Credo Publishing Company Ltd., Ontario, Canada. The sermons are unique for their freshness of style and practical approach. The messages on each Lord's Day show profound thought as well as deep pastoral concern. The fact that the majority of them were delivered during the years of the German occupation of the Netherlands, demonstrates the fact that the Heidelberg Catechism is a book of comfort fitting the need of troubled times. Professor Holwerda is startling in his clarity and has a way of driving his point home. His strong emphasis on the biblical teaching of the covenant fills a need for the time in which we live. He makes a conscious effort to stay with the Scriptures in his explanation of the Catechism. One would be hard pressed to find a clearer explanation of the Reformed-Biblical doctrine of the sacraments than that which he gives in the sermons on Lord's Days 25-30. Also his approach in the preaching of the Law is unique and worthy of consideration. It is somewhat strange that his sermons seem to be designed for believers only since there is no expressed address or appeal to unbelievers. He touches on this point in his sermon on Lord's Day 31, but does not make it very clear. This book is an excellent book for the preparation of Catechism-sermons as well as a great help for anyone who wants to learn more about this wonderful Reformed Confession.

THE FINE ART OF PREACHING by Andrew W. Blackwood. Published by Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, MI, 1976. (A reprint of the original 1937 edition.) 168 pages. Price, \$2.95. Reviewed by Joseph Brink, Pastor, Noordoos CRC, Holland, MI.

Andrew W. Blackwood, who lived from 1882-1966, was born in Clay Center, Kansas of Scottish Covenanter background. He attended Harvard College, majoring in English. After graduation he attended Princeton Seminary, He finished his seminary studies at Xenia Seminary in Ohio. Following seminary

Blackwood served several Pastorates. Then in 1930 he began teaching homiletics at Princeton Seminary. At about this time Princeton went liberal. Blackwood did not leave the faculty, as some others did. But his sympathies seemed to lie with the conservatives.

Blackwood authored or edited 22 books during his lifetime. He authored this book in 1937. This 1976 Baker edition is a reprint. I mention these biographical facts because the reprint does not mention them and the author, though well-known in homiletical circles, may be unfamiliar to some potential readers.

This book will interest primarily the preaching minister, though some laymen may have an interest in the subject. This book deals with the "how-to-preach" aspect of homiletics. Blackwood received almost no practical homiletical training in his seminary days, and he later resented that omission. Thus his own teaching and writing always emphasize his own desire to teach practically to make up for this felt weakness.

This book, like all Blackwood's books, amazes the reader with the depth and breadth of the author's reading. Blackwood shows evidence of wide reading and good ability to use the short, poignant quotation. We ministers do well to read as widely and to use short, pithy quotations as relevantly.

Blackwood's subject is that of making the sermon. He deals with the construction of the different parts of the sermon. What he says is good and helpful, especially the material about the sermon as an art, and about the introduction and conclusion of the sermon.

Most CRC ministers will agree with most of what Blackwood says in this book. His material is general and useful. He deals very little with his recommendations concerning approaches to the text and kinds of sermons, something he treats more in other books and something to which many CRC ministers will find themselves objecting in various ways.

In general this is a good book for ministers who want to spend some time reviewing practical homiletics.