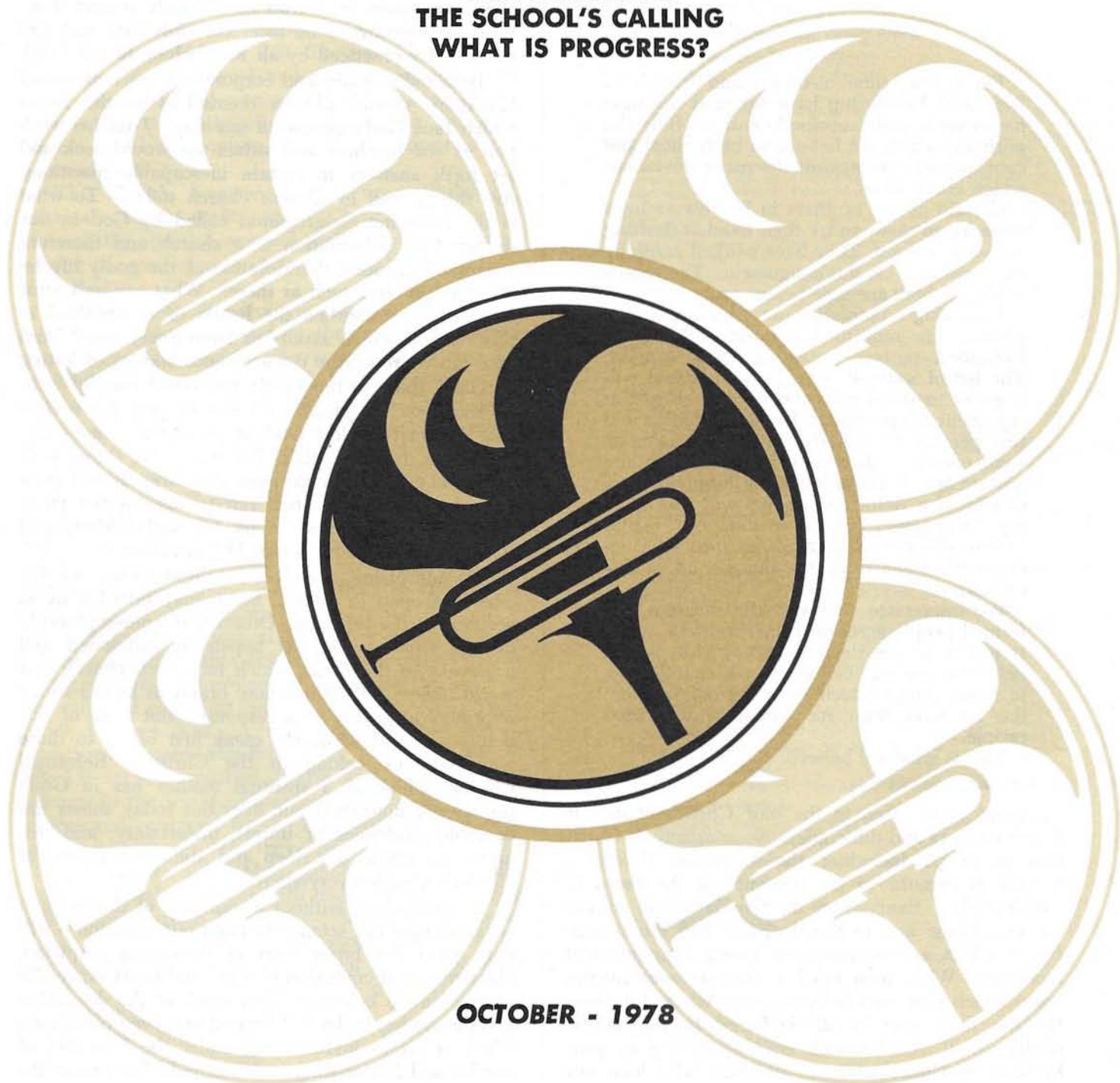


The Outlook

**OUR TESTIMONY
THE SCHOOL'S CALLING
WHAT IS PROGRESS?**



OCTOBER - 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

I.

For a long time members and friends of Reformed Fellowship have felt that the time has come to state succinctly and yet fully the positions which we believe to be biblical and confessional over against the many deviations which confront us.

Certain of our brothers in Northwest Iowa were found ready to try their hand at drafting such a statement. They have worked carefully and arduously on this assignment. The results of their labors are now before us.

Following completion of this document copies were sent to a number of Christian Reformed pastors, soliciting their support. The list of some 40 who have indicated willingness to stand with the signatories to this statement is appended. Let us hasten to add that persons so invited to sign this testimony were chosen without any intention of ruling anyone out. It is our hope that large numbers of Christian Reformed pastors will rise up to say, "we agree! Please include our names in future issues of *OUTLOOK* as men who endorse wholeheartedly the things said in this testimony."

We appreciate that not all Christian Reformed people agree with the positions taken. It is our prayer that by issuing this as our testimony we may call the whole church back to those things which were, in our opinion, the common faith for Christian Reformed people.

This is what we believe.

Again as so often in the past Christ's church is facing dangers and difficulties. No company of Christian believers, including the Christian Reformed Church is immune to the influence of the times in which it lives. Everywhere the foundations of society are crumbling, and in the doctrinal and moral confusion which reigns many are losing their spiritual moorings. What men need is a clear and ringing voice which summons believers everywhere to return to "the faith once-for-all delivered to the saints" (Jude, vs. 4). Under such compulsion we as your brothers in Christ address "all them who love our

Lord Jesus Christ with a love incorruptible" (Eph. 6:24).

Necessity is laid upon us by these trends which threaten the integrity and existence of the Gospel entrusted to the church.

False theologies, philosophies, and patterns of life have gained ascendancy in many communities and nations. These can only produce darkness of understanding, distress and despair of soul, together with everlasting death for all who forsake the Word. Our address, therefore, we regard as an act of humble obedience to the apostolic command that believers are to be "ready always to give answer to every man that asketh of you a reason concerning the hope that is in you, yet with meekness and fear" (I Peter 3:15). This we attempt, with the prayer that many who share a common faith with us will rally around those things which are to be most certainly believed and consistently practiced by all who belong to our Lord.

Both individually and corporately, we believe, all Christians should address themselves to the issues which face God's people in our day. Together with you as our brothers and sisters we would seek and set forth answers to certain inescapable questions. Are things well in Christ's church today? To what is the believing congregation called by God in our times? Can deformation in a church and therefore spiritual and moral deterioration of the godly life be stemmed in days such as these? What can and must be done to strengthen the hearts of the faithful in this turmoil which assails us from every side? And how can we recapture the assurance and joy of letting our light shine as the Lord's redeemed people?

Earnestly we plead with you to pray for revival and reformation, lest God in judgment remove the light from its candlestick. For unless He shines with truth and grace upon our lives, the darkness will grow ever deeper and we shall fail to discern the paths which are marked out for us, for our children, and for all who would rejoice in His salvation.

By addressing ourselves to these issues, we lay ourselves open to attack. Some may criticize us as accusers of the brethren. Others may contemptuously dismiss what we say as hopelessly outmoded and irrelevant to the issues which face both church and world today. Still others may brand us as self-styled reformers unworthy of a response. But none of this deters us. And while we speak first of all to those who with us belong to the Christian Reformed Church, which as a spiritual mother has in God's providence nourished our lives but today shows undeniable evidences of unrest, uncertainty, and disunity, we affirm our deep and abiding concern for all God's people everywhere.

To drift along without a sounding of the trumpet — as too long has seemingly been our situation — will only yield the bitter fruit of increasing suspicion, alienation, and confusion of mind and heart especially among simple believers. Too much of the discussion and debate has had a debilitating and even paralyzing effect as far as joyful living under the Lordship of our blessed Savior-King is concerned. For unless the

Spirit again invigorates and directs us, we also in our families, churches, schools, and other communal Christian enterprises will bring forth only leaves where fruit should be found.

In the light of the above we call upon all who love the Lord Jesus Christ and acknowledge His Word to be the sole rule for faith and conduct to rally around the following affirmations. These, we are convinced, must become the God-pleasing pattern for the renewal of our lives, for the witness which we give by word and deed to all men, and for the glory of God whose we are and whom we serve.

- 1 -

ON THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST

As Christian believers we focus first of all on the grace of God who has made us "a people for His own possession" (I Peter 2:9). Through Christ by the preaching of the Gospel and the persuasion of the Spirit He has joined us together as the company of those called unto Himself to serve in the "office of all believers" as prophets, priests, and kings to the glory of God.

This church, however, is no vague, ill-defined, ethereal spiritual reality; it, by Christ's appointment through the apostles, assumes visible shape and form among the sons of men (Acts 2:42; 9:31; 13:1f; 14:23; Eph. 4:11).

Every believer, therefore, in company with fellow-believers must discern before the face of the Lord the marks (distinguishing characteristics) of that instituted congregation to which he or she is joined. According to God's Word only such a church may rightly expect His blessing where the Word is purely preached, the sacraments are rightly administered, and Biblical discipline is faithfully exercised. Although no congregation or group of congregations will ever manifest these marks without some stain in this life, yet the duty of all who belong is to promote these marks in love and loyalty to Christ. Only so is the authority of the Savior over the lives of His people truly honored and maintained.

Because of our mutual infirmities it has pleased Christ to ordain within His church the special offices of the ministry of the Word (I Tim. 5:17; II Tim. 2:2), the ruling of eldership (Acts 14:23; I Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9; I Thess. 5:12, 13; Heb. 13:17; I Peter 5:1-4), and the diaconate (Acts 6:1-6; Phil. 1:1; I Tim. 3:8-10, 12, 13) for our spiritual health and our corporate witness in the world. Those lawfully called to these offices and equipped by the Holy Spirit do not constitute a spiritual elite; they are the servants of all for the Savior's sake (Matt. 20:25-28). But through them He speaks and acts with that spiritual authority which derives from Him alone (Matt. 10:40; I Thess. 5:12, 13; Heb. 13:17). They should therefore be obeyed by those entrusted to their care so long as what is required faithfully reflects the demands of God's Word.

In recent times these offices in Christ's church have fallen into disrepute.

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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Thus the prophetic calling of the preacher of the Word has often been reduced to that of a psychological counsellor or of one who leads the congregation in "sharing" individual insights and experiences. This we deplore and call the church back to such preaching which affirms without hesitation "Thus saith the Lord," lest there come upon us a famine of the hearing of the Word (Amos 8:11). We also fear that the high calling of the Gospel ministry, as set forth in Scripture, is becoming much obscured by assigning ordained preachers to tasks which are only indirectly related to the official preaching and teaching of the Word.

The kingly office of the ruling elder has also been undercut in these days by those who reduce the scope and authority of the discipline of the church. Here we express deep concern that family visiting, once a strength within the Reformed churches, is being grossly neglected or is degenerating into a social visit with only a few spiritual emphases. We call the church back to a ruling eldership which supervises the preaching of God's Word, watches over the lives of God's people entrusted to its care, and safeguards the Lord's table in the face of the practice of an "open communion" which is increasing also among us (I Cor. 11:28-34; II Cor. 6:14-7:1).

Likewise the diaconate must be called to its Scripturally-ordained task of showing mercy and benevolence. We reject every view and practice which reduces this high office to that of fiscal control and accounting; also to that which sees this office as the training ground for the so-called "higher office" of the eldership.

We assert that these three offices in Christ's church are not open to women. This is not to defend a sexual hierarchy or to affirm male superiority and female inferiority. Rather, we view this as a clear Biblical demand flowing from the revealed principle of the headship of man over woman as set forth in the garden of Eden and reaffirmed by Paul in his inspired writings (I Cor. 11:7-12; 14:33-36; I Tim. 2:12-15). Therefore we repudiate any hermeneutical gymnastics which interpret Scripture according to views and notions widely held in today's world, in order thereby to approve the ordination of women to ecclesiastical office.

- 2 -

ON HOLY SCRIPTURE AND ITS INTERPRETATION

From the above it follows unmistakably that central and basic to the life of the church is that Word which lives and abides forever (Matt. 10:7; 28:18-20; Acts 1:8; 6:7; 8:4; Rom. 10:8-15, etc.).

It is none other than the Bible, the Holy Scripture of both the Old and the New Testaments which constitute both the foundation and the norm for the church's faith and conduct in this world. To it nothing may be added; from it nothing taken away (Rev. 22:18-20).

That Word, although coming to us in God's condescension through human language and through hu-

man writers, we confess to be entirely and in all parts inspired by the Holy Spirit. It is both infallible and inerrant (Mark 13:31; II Tim. 3:16, 17; I Peter 1:25; II Peter 1:19-21).

We therefore reject as illegitimate and spiritually disastrous any attempt to make its authority and/or reliability dependent upon man's understanding or scholarship. Although the human authors wrote within an historical situation which molded their understanding and language, any teaching which for such or similar reasons concludes that, since the Bible is time-bound (either in part or as whole) it therefore does not possess divine authority and relevance for our lives today, must be rejected out of hand. And any method of Scripture interpretation which destroys, limits, or otherwise denies the manifest sense of the words of the Bible, going beyond the boundaries of a confessionally Reformed hermeneutic, is anathema.

Such methods, no matter how impressively asserted with scholarly credentials, can only render Scriptural meaning unintelligible. In the end they undermine a childlike faith in the reliability of what God has spoken. From this follows clearly that we categorically reject both the presuppositions and the validity of that which is commonly called "higher criticism." By faith we accept the doctrines of creation, the fall of mankind, divine providence over all men and things, and predestination as these are revealed in Scripture and clearly confessed in our Reformed creeds; including the factualness of the account given in Genesis 1 through 11 with its details, which have been attacked both openly and surreptitiously among us. And this affirmation we make concerning every passage of Scripture which addresses man in an inescapably plain and factual manner.

At the same time we are compelled to deplore the growing neglect and ignorance of the Bible which characterizes the lives of many professing Christians today. Too many by their preoccupation with favorite texts or topics (such as prophecy or doctrine or ethical commands or devotional material) do grave injustice to the unity of God's Word. Nor may the use of any other writings — no matter how clear and helpful — ever obscure the high calling of all Christian believers to read, study, and meditate upon the Bible daily and diligently.

We affirm also that Scripture itself is to be the source for all faithful teaching in and by the church — in the pulpit, in the classroom, in pastoral calling and counselling, and no less in our evangelistic endeavors both in our lands and throughout the world. The Word and it alone establishes the content for the church's message at all times (Luke 16:31; I Tim. 6:3-5; II Tim. 2:15f; 4:1-5). Therefore we condemn the prevalent idea and practice whereby the needs of the human situation dictate the content of preaching, teaching, and counselling. Such a problem-solving approach is man-centered and undermines the purpose, clarity, and efficacy of Holy Scripture. Likewise every approach, method, and program used to reach the unsaved and unchurched must pass the test of "the full counsel of God," lest we depend on our

ON THE CREEDS AND GOVERNMENT OF THE CHURCH

Because of growing misunderstandings and misinterpretations of the Bible, we acknowledge wholeheartedly the necessity and indispensability of creedal standards for the welfare of Christ's church (I Tim. 2:15-16; 6:20, 21; II Tim. 1:13, 14). Drawn from and subordinate to the Word itself, these direct the church in its worship, witness, and work in the world.

As those belonging to the Reformed family of churches, we pledge our wholehearted commitment to the "Three Forms of Unity," that is, the *Heidelberg Catechism*, the *Belgic Confession*, and the *Canons of Dort*. We deplore the sad condition prevalent in those churches which, while officially committed to certain historic creeds, now tolerate or even defend deviations from their own standards. Nor dare we in good conscience before the Lord of all truth allow for ourselves or any office-bearer in the church the liberty to signify either in speech or writing adherence to these confessional standards with any mental or emotional reservations.

To safeguard the pure preaching of the Word and the integrity of the church's witness to the world we believe that the *Form of Subscription*, which has served the church well for hundreds of years, should be maintained without alterations. Within the bounds of the standards there is room for difference of emphasis on some acknowledged points of interpretation. But no affirmation therein may be ignored, contradicted, or denied, unless it be demonstrated to the churches which have adopted these creeds that said affirmations are contrary to Holy Scripture itself.

In sum, we assert that these historic Reformed confessions can and therefore ought to serve as the boundaries within which the church does theology, interprets the Scriptures, and professes its truths. And since the history of the church bears out trustworthy confessional documents arise mainly when the church responds Scripturally to new challenges which provoke conflicts, we believe that the time is not at hand for the Christian Reformed Church to attempt the writing of an additional creed. Today it is far more necessary that preachers and people together renew their acquaintance with the creedal heritage which has been left to us in God's good providence.

Also, in subordination to the Bible and to the creeds, we pledge our loyalty to and defense of the *Church Order*. By common consent it has been endorsed by all the congregations of the Christian Reformed Church as the regulations by which we bind ourselves; hence also classical and synodical rules as well as consistorial may not overshadow or supersede the principles of the *Church Order* as it seeks to apply the teachings of the Bible and of the confessions to the life of the churches.

We feel it necessary to warn against both a threatening independentism by which either an individual or a congregation decides in how far it is pleased to implement these regulations and against a tyrannical

ON THE PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL

So that the good news of God and His salvation may be proclaimed to the ends of the earth, our Lord has laid upon the church as its primary responsibility the preaching of the Word. It alone, through the efficacy of the Spirit, confronts men with God's self-revelation in Christ Jesus. Thereby He calls all who hear to a life of repentance, faith, and obedience (Acts 2:38; 10:43; Titus 2:11-14). This is the God-ordained means unto the salvation of sinful mankind (Rom. 10:8-15).

From this affirmation flow several inescapable consequences for the confession, the piety, and the practice of the congregation.

Each congregation, and therein especially those who hold special office, must remind itself repeatedly of the place which preaching is accorded by the Bible. Likewise it must avoid, also for the sake of its own spiritual well-being, all patterns and practices in its public worship and witness which allot a secondary and subordinate place to the official proclamation of the Word. The Gospel as preached must be central to all ecclesiastical activities without exception.

Full well we realize that complaints about preaching abound also in our churches. With those which obviously cannot pass the test of Scripture we need not concern ourselves. But many members of Christ's church have little taste for sound instruction; they insist on personal inspiration or stirring of the emotions. Others disapprove of the time-honored method of catechetical preaching. Still others claim that in liturgical experimentation rather than in faithful presentation of the full counsel of God lies the hope for church renewal. In so far as these erroneous notions are perpetuated by pulpit and pew, to that degree will the Lord withhold His Word from us and bring spiritual famine upon the land.

Sorely needed today to renew and encourage God's people unto consecrated living in every relationship of life is a more Biblical understanding of the nature and calling of the ministry of the Word. For this we have the right to look to our theological Seminary where those who aspire to this high office are being trained (II Tim. 2:2).

We urgently pray God to reinvigorate today's prophets with that zeal which leads men to conviction of sin, godly repentance, and humble faith. Therefore we decry the professionalizing of the Gospel ministry that produces sterility in the church; we repudiate those forces which urge the church to see the ministry not as office but rather as function in inter-personal relationships; we are pledged to pray and labor uncompromisingly for the continuation of the prophetic and apostolic tradition once held in such high esteem among Reformed believers.

hierarchicalism by which classes and/or synods bind congregations beyond that which is either lawful or advantageous for local assemblies of believers. In both instances the faith which together we confess as the bond of our union and communion can too easily be manipulated to serve the ambitions of a few or the immediate desires of a narrow majority. And when boards, executive committees, or other church-appointed agencies put on pressures (whether financial or otherwise) to gain power over the congregations and their welfare, this is to be deplored and resisted. Here we would remind everyone that consistorial authority within the churches derives directly from Christ Jesus and is therefore basic and original; the authority of broader assemblies is delegated and derivative. Such assemblies, therefore, should take heed lest they lay upon congregations burdens greater than Scripture would allow (Acts 15:28).

Although we recognize the duty of the church to address God's Word to contemporary social, economic, and political issues, this address is fitting only from the pulpits of the church and among Christian believers in their common walk of life. At no time ought the church, by way of classis or synod, speak out with binding authority on matters of a non-ecclesiastical nature. To do so despises the power of the Word officially proclaimed, violates all historic Reformed practice and treads the dangerous path of going beyond that which the Bible plainly teaches as the faith once-for-all delivered to the saints.

— 5 —

ON THE RESPONSE TO GOSPEL PREACHING

The primary purpose and aim of Gospel preaching, whether in the congregations or by means of mission outreach to the ends of the world, is to bring men, women, and children to personal repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. From this and this alone will spring that spiritual obedience which delights the God of our salvation.

Sin is first of all a matter of personal involvement; it incurs guilt and falls under God's wrath and deserves His righteous condemnation. Hence without the renewal of men's hearts and lives there can be no hope for reformation in the various relationships and structures which are so much a part of our life in this present age. That salvation to which God calls us by His Word is grounded in His eternal decree (Acts 13:48; Rom. 8:29, 30; Eph. 1:4, 5; I Peter 1:2). By this He has been pleased for reasons known only to Himself to display His mercy in saving some of the human race while passing by others in His sovereignty and condemning them justly for their sins (Rom. 9:22-24; I Peter 2:8). Yet the church has the commission to proclaim the Gospel to all men everywhere and without exception, declaring the sure promise of God that He graciously saves all who repent and turn to Him in faith (Acts 1:8; 2:38-40; 26:16-18, etc.). We therefore reject all views of man which minimize personal responsibility and teach

that evil resides in the societal structures to produce human weakness and sinfulness.

When under Gospel preaching men come to such repentance and faith, they will in thankful obedience to their Savior and Lord unite themselves with a congregation which strives to demonstrate and defend the marks of the true church (Acts 2:42-47; 9:31). This demand the Scriptures lay upon all who name the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. To its discipline the believer is to submit himself willingly and cheerfully (Matt. 16:18-19; 18:17-20). In its on-going work he is to share with other believers the time, the talents, the material resources, and the opportunities which the Lord provides.

Where no such manifestation of the true church exists, the Gospel must be vigorously and persistently preached with the confidence that God will in this way call His own out of darkness into the light of His saving grace. Such believers then have the obligation and privilege to organize a congregation of the faithful in obedience to the pattern laid down in the Word.

We decry the apparent ease with which not a few professing Christians separate themselves from a manifestation of the true church in order to satisfy some purely personal ambitions, notions, or passing desires. Nor can one who confesses Christ separate himself from the believing congregation and be by himself except in peril of his soul's salvation.

At the same time we recognize that since no congregation or denomination has attained to perfection, the call to church reformation and renewal is always in order. It is to be given in submission to the clear teachings of the Word and in the spirit of Christian affection and concern for the welfare of all. And when this call continues to go unheeded and a congregation or denomination walks in the way of deformation and deterioration, then true believers are obligated for the sake of Christ's honor to separate themselves from such a company which will not correct its doctrine or pattern of life according to God's Word.

(to be continued)

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reformed women speak

what is

"Progress"?

LAURIE VANDEN HEUVEL

(I)

"Progress" can be defined as the process of advancing toward a specific goal. There have been sharp differences of opinion on what constitutes progress in various areas of human endeavor.

In the area of environment control, some view progress as the development of new shopping plazas and housing developments.

Conservationists see these projects not as progress but rather as a *threat* to the preservation of our natural resources.

In the area of education, some educators maintain that permissiveness and uncontrolled self-expression in the creative arts constitutes progress. Other educators deny this and claim that discipline and structured education is the route we should go.

In the area of homemaking, time-saving devices, pre-packaged meals and quick mix baking products are advertised as real *progress* for the busy homemaker and I must admit that some of these products have rescued me from many an embarrassing situation. But others insist that this so-called "progress," has robbed homemaking of its creativity and released more time for women which in turn has created problems such as an overloaded job market and working mothers shirking family responsibilities.

And so we could go on and on. Experts within any given area can differ widely on what constitutes "progress" within that area.

What is true in the physical realm is also true in the ecclesiastical realm. Even within our own CRC, there are increasing and sharp differences on the issue of progress. Some see a relaxing of strictures on lodge membership, marriage, divorce, homosexuality and women in ecclesiastical office as real "progress" in the CRC. Others see such relaxing of regulations as alarming *regress*.

Is there any *one* factor that is responsible for such differences of opinion even among experts in every

area of human activity? Yes there is and that is the factor of *goal*.

For the land developer, the goal is pleasant and convenient living. How can he achieve this? Build lovely homes and convenient shopping areas. For the conservationist however, the goal is protection of the natural environment. How can he achieve this? Oppose intrusions of land developers and improve methods for the conservation of minerals, energy, wildlife, forests, air, plants, soil and water.

For the permissive educator, the goal is self-expression. For the structured educator, the goal is self-discipline.

For the pre-fab homemaker, the goal is convenience. For the full-time homemaker, the goal is creativity, industry and frugality.

These groups clash with one another because their *goals* are different.

But what about *goals* in the ecclesiastical realm, particularly the CRC? Don't we all have the same goals? An observer at this year's Synod would tell you that both sides of the controversial issues claimed to have the Spirit's guidance. They both expressed the desire to do the *will of God*.

The crux of the problem lies in what those holding each side of the issues consider to be the *will of God*. Both sides agree that the will of God is expressed in the *Word of God*. But the problem is — they differ on what that *Word is* and what it *says*.

One side says the *authority* of that *Word* is derived from the *contents*. The other side says it is derived from its *Author* — God Himself. This difference is basic and has very serious consequences, as we shall see.

One side says that God's *Word* is infallible *only* as to what it *intends* to teach. What does it intend to teach? It intends to teach the way of salvation. Thus, the *message* of sin and salvation is infallibly recorded in the Scriptures, but the *details* of Scripture in which the message occurs need not necessarily be accurate. For example, the fact that sin entered the world the Bible clearly teaches infallibly. But whether or not sin entered by way of a literal serpent, a factual tree, a factual Eve or Adam is at best an open question for some. The people of this opinion in the CRC apply this same hermeneutical principle to all parts of Scripture in a variety of ways. They will speak of an "infallible" Bible and even an "inerrant" Bible, but they mean something entirely different from what the CRC has taught since its beginning. They mean that this Bible is infallible and inerrant *only* in its central *message*, not in the details of the context in which that general message occurs. To know where they *really* stand, one must ask them if they believe in the absolute **FACTICITY** of all the details of the records of historical events in Scripture. Then the truth comes out. They do not. This position on the Scriptures, held by too many leaders in the CRC, was called "Position B" by Dr. De Koster in his keen and accurate editorial of April 28, 1972.

"Position A" (as Dr. De Koster labeled it) is the

position of historic Christianity, of the tradition of the CRC, of this periodical and of this column. "Position A" insists that the authority of the Bible rests upon its *Author* — who is God Himself. This divine authority extends to the very words of Scripture so that *all* of Scripture is inerrant; historical passages are accurate in every detail and are *binding* in everything they teach.

These two opposing views of Scripture are the *root cause* of the problems which plague the CRC. For example, in the current debate concerning women in ecclesiastical office, "Position A" takes seriously all the restrictions laid down in the New Testament for office-bearers while "Position B" dismisses them as "time-bound," "culturally-conditioned," not pertinent to the central *message* of salvation contained in Scripture and therefore, irrelevant.

Many people in the CRC have not gotten too excited about or involved in the debate on Scripture which has been going on in the CRC for a number of years. They have considered it to be a theologians' battleground which had very little to do with their own spiritual life or that of their church.

But suddenly, now that they are confronted with the practical issue of women in ecclesiastical office, when they are faced with the reality of having women deacons, elders and even preachers (we just about had one this year), they ask, "How did we in the CRC ever come to this point?" They feel that this is a sudden and threatening intrusion on the convictions they have cherished for a lifetime.

Actually, this decision for women in ecclesiastical office is not sudden at all. We have tolerated these two opposing positions on Scripture in the CRC despite the efforts of several churches to expose and root out "Position B." Unbiblical decisions are the natural result of such tolerance. Until the constituency of our beloved denomination, comes to grips with this basic conflict regarding the Scriptures, we will continue to be bombarded with new stands and policies with which we do not agree.

(to be continued)

REV. JOHN BYKER

speaks on

**"THE ETHICAL DILEMMA OF THE
CONSERVATIVE"**

November 9 at 7:30 P.M.

in the

**NORTH ST. CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH
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LESSONS FROM I PETER



REV. HENRY VANDER KAM

Lessons 5 and 6 on I Peter by Rev. Henry Vander Kam, pastor of the Christian Reformed Church, Lake Worth, Florida, are in this issue. Two lessons appear each month.

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LESSON 5

I Peter 1:22-2:3

Obedience to the Word

The Word of God gives us the knowledge of God and the way of salvation, but it also comes with its demands. It requires obedience. We are to become *doers* of the Word and not hearers only. The Word enlightens us regarding many things and it is also the Word by which we are to live.

Love of the brethren — Peter has stressed the preciousness of their salvation and his readers have understood, in a measure, what this means in their lives. They have purified themselves according to the demands of the gospel. No one can claim the salvation through the blood of Christ and remain the same kind of person he was. They have become obedient to the truth of God. This is an obedience which places every aspect of life under the discipline of the Word.

That Word is to control life and leads to the reformation of the inner life which reveals itself in deeds. That which the Apostle mentions specifically is the love of the brethren. In this he would encourage them. They are to love one another sincerely. This love among believers is one that comes from the heart. It is a lasting love and is therefore not easily broken.

It is the love which is foreign to those who have not tasted of salvation.

Made possible by the new birth — This love one for another is possible for them because they have been born again. Christ had already made it plain to Nicodemus that it was an absolute essential for a man to be born again to enter the Kingdom of God. Today the term "born again" is seemingly given a somewhat different meaning than intended by the Word of God. Many today speak of "born again Christians" while the Bible makes it clear that there are no other kinds of Christians. If a person is worthy of the name "Christian," the evidence is there that he has been born again. Men had to be born again because they were dead in trespasses and sins!

This new birth, of which the Apostle speaks, is not of corruptible (subject to perishing) seed, but of incorruptible. This new birth has the guarantee of endless life. A life has been born which is not subject to death. We can indeed speak of the perseverance of the saints! Out of the incorruptible seed comes a life which cannot be touched by the perishing elements of this world. The seed is good and the life, to which it gives birth, flees corruption and seeks holiness.

Comes through the Word — This new life, says the Apostle, comes through the Word of God. Usually we say that it is the Spirit of God who implants this new life. However, the Apostle is here emphasizing the importance of the Word of God and their obedience to it. The Spirit is the Author of the Word and uses that Word to instill faith and new life in the heart of man. That Word is *alive!* So is it able to give life. That Word is powerful and gives power.

The Word of God has a lasting quality such as cannot be found in the whole world. The Word stands. The truth of God doesn't change. Everything in this world is subject to both change and decay. The author quotes Isaiah 40 and Psalm 103. Even the highest and noblest in this world, man, is subject to the ravages of time. However great and powerful a man may become, his end is as the grass of the field. However beautiful many things may appear on this earth, its end is as the flower of the field. But, the Word of God abides! It stands forever. Time has no effect on it. Men may sit in judgment on the Word but the Word finally judges them! No, through that Word they have been begotten again. They need not worry whether or not that Word will be able to give them life later — that Word never fails. The promises of that Word always stand. This Word will also be fully carried out. No part of that Word will ever fail.

"And this is the word of good tidings which was preached unto you." The people to whom he was writing did not have the Word of God in their possession as we do today. But, the Word has been preached to them and therefore they are in possession of it. They were brought to the new life by the preaching of that Word. Where the Word is purely preached it is the Word of God! The Apostle has a

very high regard for the preaching of the Word. He is also convinced that the whole counsel of God has indeed been preached to this people. That preaching was alive and gave life. The preaching of the Word separated from all others. They must now give evidence in their lives that the Word has transformed them into new creatures. Even though they have no Bible in the house, if they hear the pure preaching of the Word, they have enough.

Putting away all wickedness — Although the chapter divisions in our Bibles usually indicate a clear change in the thoughts presented, that is not the case here. The Apostle continues a discussion of those things which he taught in the previous chapter. He now draws the conclusions from the things spoken of previously. Because they have been redeemed with the precious blood of Christ and because they have been born again through the Word of God, they must put away the deeds and thoughts which belong to those who have not become the children of God. They must put aside, as one would lay a garment aside, all wickedness or malice and all guile. The heart must be in tune with the teaching of the Word of God.

They may not be evil-intentioned toward their fellow men but must love them. They may not harbor a spirit of hypocrisy. The hypocrite is an actor. He pretends to be what he is not, is insincere. The outward action must agree with the inner attitude. They must rid themselves of all envy. Envy is not able to stand the prosperity of the other. They should delight in the welfare of their fellow-men. Then, too, evil speaking should not be found among them. By evil speakings the Apostle means the slander, the falsehoods spoken concerning our fellow-men. No, his readers are to be obedient to the Word. That Word is the truth and demands the truth. That Word has given them life. They must now live out of that life. Their actions must agree with the life which has been implanted within them and may not be in conflict with it. Negatively, the people of God are **not** to live as the world does.

Growing unto salvation — The believer's life and welfare are, however, not only determined by the negative aspects. Positively they are to long for the spiritual milk. This oft-quoted text is not so easy to understand. By means of this illustration the Apostle is teaching them concerning their attitude to the Word of God and what it contains for them. Paul has at times spoken of the contrast between strong meat and milk. That is not in the picture here.

When Peter speaks of newborn babes he is not necessarily referring to the short time his readers have been believers. The illustration itself must be kept clearly in mind. A newborn babe has a diet of milk only. With such a babe there is a longing for this milk to the exclusion of everything else. The one desire is — to be fed! That is the way the believers must long for the Word of God. Peter speaks of a longing for spiritual, or reasonable milk. This is a difficult word to explain. Paul uses the same term

in Romans 12:1. It is not a milk which belongs to the material world, it is spiritual, and it is a milk which is totally suitable for them. It is to be a milk which is without guile, which is pure, which is without any foreign element. They must therefore have a deep longing for the Word of God which is free from all heresy. That must be the characteristic of those who are born to a new life through the Word. This Word has given them life and this Word is the nourishment of the life they have now received.

To have this new life is wonderful, but it is not enough. They must grow unto salvation. They may not remain small and weak. To say that we have the new birth is wonderful but we must proceed. The readers are to become strong in the faith and are to become men in the faith. They must grow to full stature! If there is the longing within them for the Word of God as a newborn babe has for milk, that growth will come. The Word of God is the only proper food for the person who has been born again.

By the illustration he has used the Apostle shows the great importance of the Word of God in the life of the believer, and at the same time, makes clear to them that they can judge their own spiritual lives by the strength of the longing they have for the Word. If they are born again, they have been given this new life through the Word of God. That new life will then long for more of that Word. The life given by the Word *demand*s that Word as its food. It cannot feed on anything else. That new life wants to grow! It has tasted of the true riches of Christ and realizes that there is still much more.

"If ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious." They will have this longing, this strong desire for the Word of God, if they have begun to taste the graciousness of God. They will, in other words, have this longing if they are indeed born again! If a person has not tasted that the Lord is gracious, he will have no desire for His Word. It is therefore a test of true faith. To those who have that new birth He has shown Himself gracious, i.e., as a God Who forgives. He shows this grace to everyone who believes.

Obedience to the Word of God does mean that the believer no longer lives as the man of the world and that he learns to love his fellowman. But, it means far more. He must obey that Word in all that it commands him and he must realize his responsibility to the Word itself. He must use that Word and feed on it! That Word must govern his life and he must long for it more than for anything else.

Questions for discussion:

1. Why does the New Testament command us to love the brethren so often when it is clear that such love is the natural fruit of faith?
2. What do many today understand by the term "born again"?
3. Should the preaching of the Word change with the times? Explain.
4. Is preaching indeed the Word of God? Explain.
5. Can we grow spiritually without the preaching of the Word? Explain.

The temple of God

The New Testament is filled with all manner of illustrations and metaphors to make clear to the believer the nature of his salvation and the riches which are his through the faith which has been given him. These illustrations and metaphors indeed make the teachings concerning our faith much clearer.

However, it seems as though no illustration is clear enough or broad enough to teach all that the Apostles intend to proclaim. How often Paul goes from one illustration to another or mixes the metaphors to make clear the unsearchable riches of God in Jesus Christ. Peter also changes the figure now, from the strong desire of a babe for milk to the idea of a temple being built, to reveal the close relationship which the believer has to his Savior, Jesus Christ.

Christ — the living stone — They must come to Him. Of course, He first comes to them and makes them desirous to come to Him, but that is not the emphasis which the Apostle is seeking to convey here. They have a responsibility too. They must come to Him in a true faith. They must seek Him. They are not to seek anyone else. All of that which he has to say to them in these verses hinges on this. They are to seek union with Jesus Christ and to do His will.

They are to come to the One who is here described as a "living stone" in the temple which God erects. Here again the Apostle goes beyond the usual and common illustration. No stone is "alive" when it is fit into a building; but this one is! This is the stone which was rejected by those who were charged to build the temple of God here on earth. The builders looked at this stone and cast it aside, believing that it did not fit into their plans for this building.

The Psalmist (Psalm 118) had foretold this event and the leaders of the people had carried it out when they condemned Jesus to be crucified. But, God, the "Master Architect," had chosen this stone. To Him it was the most precious stone. This was the one stone which could not be missed from this temple of God. To show how precious this One was to Him, He announced to the people: "This is my beloved Son!" Although He was rejected by the leaders of the people, God raised Him from the dead, gave Him the place at His right hand, and gave Him a name which is above every name.

As they come to Him, Who is the living stone, they themselves become living stones! The contact with Him gives life to them! Thus they are built into a spiritual house or temple. The house itself is alive! It is built of living material.

In this way the Apostle gives a description of the church of Jesus Christ as the very temple of God. God dwells in this temple or house. Here His people receive all the benefits He has promised them. Not only is a dwelling place of God described here, but the "stones" of that building have fellowship with Him. Nothing like it is found in nature, of course,

and the truth conveyed is again far more than the illustration is able to contain. The individual believers, like the individual stones, are part of the larger whole, the house or temple.

A holy priesthood — Again the author changes the figure because the illustration of a temple does not suffice to make clear the believer's duty and blessing in that temple of God. They are called to a holy priesthood. From one point of view they are part of the building itself, but they are also called upon to do their work in that building. They are to officiate as a holy priesthood — devoted to His service exclusively and thus bringing their highest service. As priests they are to offer spiritual sacrifices. The Old Testament priests were also to do that by means of the bulls and goats which they sacrificed.

However, the spiritual nature of those sacrifices was often lost from sight and the mere fact of bringing sacrifices according to the law was all that was left. Then the Lord refused to accept the sacrifices brought and condemned the practice of only external obedience. This holy priesthood, however, will bring sacrifices which are acceptable to God because they come through Jesus Christ. These spiritual sacrifices include themselves and all that they have.

The cornerstone — Returning to the figure of the temple and its construction the Apostle turns his gaze to the Christ Who is the foundation of this temple and determines its measurements. The Scriptures spoke of Him centuries ago (Is. 28:16). God Himself would lay the cornerstone of this temple. The term "cornerstone," as it is used in the Bible, is much richer than the meaning in common use among men, and its meaning cannot be exhausted by dictionary definition. God chose that cornerstone carefully. It was precious to Him. It filled every requirement. Those who believe in Him, i.e., the stone placed upon this cornerstone, shall not be put to shame — shall not want for a firm foundation. Their hopes will never be put to shame. All that has been promised them through Him will be realized.

To those who are believers He is precious as He is in the sight of God. They owe everything to Him. It is only in union with Him that they have life. They would never attain to their own purpose but for Him. They cannot be cornerstones! Only when the cornerstone has been laid is there a place for them. His preciousness can never be praised enough by the true believer.

A story of stumbling — For those who do not believe it is a different story. They do not honor the Christ of God but they can do nothing to refuse Him a place in the temple of God. Although the builders rejected this stone, it was made the head of the corner. The builders of former days do not determine the nature of the building — God does. Nor are the unbelievers able to ignore Him. For them He has become a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence.

Men will either build on that one foundation which has been laid for their faith or they will stumble

over that same foundation-stone. They stumble at the Word, being disobedient, says the Apostle. To this disobedience they were also appointed. This was in the decree of God. His decree is not in part so that man may work out the rest sovereignly, but is all-inclusive.

The purpose and goal — But you, in contrast to the unbelievers, stand in a different relationship to Jesus Christ and have an entirely different purpose and goal. The unbeliever tries to cast the Christ aside because they are offended by Him. The believers form an elect race. They have been chosen by God Who has given them a rebirth so that they now form the large family of God. They are also called “a royal priesthood.” They are the priests who serve the King of kings. They themselves also partake of royalty because of the close relationship in which they stand to Him.

There is, at the same time, something entirely new in their office. Priests could not be kings nor could kings be priests under the old covenant because the one had to come from the tribe of Judah while the other had to come from the tribe of Levi. Prophets, who did not have to come from any particular tribe, could be kings (David) or priests (Moses). Under the new dispensation there can be a royal priesthood because the old has fallen away and the original relationship has been restored (Melchizedek). Besides, they are a holy nation. They have been cleansed by the blood of Christ and are now set apart for the service of God. They form a nation in the true and best sense of the word. It is a people with one goal and one life-style. Finally, they are called “a people for God’s own possession.” God has chosen them as His people and has made them His property. The relationship of God to His redeemed people of the New Testament is more intimate than was ever possible in the “Theocracy” of the Old Testament.

From darkness to light — The purpose of all that has been given them is to “show forth the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.” For this reason they have been set aside and have received many gifts and abilities. They must now declare to all men the marvelous works of God. These were works of grace of mercy and of love. They are able to declare it because they have received these gifts themselves. They had been in darkness. They had led lives of misery and were in the employ of evil. They must now show forth to others the great works of God which He has revealed whereby men can be translated from the realm of darkness into the marvelous light of God. They themselves are examples of it. They are not given a message simply to transmit to others, but one that has gripped them and therefore has an urgency.

They now live in the light which radiates from God. Everything is light in the realm which belongs to Him. In this light they find that peace of God which passes understanding. This is the realm of love and grace. Here the image of God is able to function again! Darkness is the picture of all that is evil.

Darkness hinders all activity and progress. His marvelous light is the perfect light in which life is nurtured and true happiness is attained.

There was a time when the readers of this epistle were not the people of God. The Apostle makes reference to the prophecy of Hosea. They were not His people and the others were left to roam about in their darkness and sin. But, they are now the people of God. They have the same privileges as those who had always been His own. Through the coming of Christ the wall which separated Jew and gentile had been broken down so that these now belong to God’s people. Because they were not His people, they had not obtained mercy in the past. Oh, it is true that even the heathen receive the mercy of God upon them daily — otherwise they would be annihilated. But, the mercy of which the Apostle speaks is the mercy which has been revealed in salvation. This mercy they have now obtained. This was a gift to them.

So the temple of God, the living temple, can now function in this world.

Questions for discussion:

1. What is the purpose and function of a cornerstone?
2. What is meant by the priesthood of all believers?
3. Can an unbeliever logically ignore Christ? Explain.
4. Does verse 8 teach reprobation? Where else is it taught?
5. How does the priesthood of Christ differ from Aaron’s? How does our priesthood differ from the priesthood of the Old Testament?
6. Can everyone be a missionary? Explain.

CHRISTIAN CHARITY MUST BE RESPONSIBLE

PETER DE JONG

If someone comes to our door soliciting contributions to help the poor but with no very clear information as to how this is to be done, I may be moved by his concern for the poor but will not likely be moved to contribute. Christian stewardship demands that I have some reasonable assurance that contributions will indeed help the noble cause before I give.

It seems to me that we confront such a situation in our recent Synod’s 19-point decision to recommend support of the “Task Force on World Hunger” to the extent of suggesting that every member contribute one percent of his income to this cause (*Acts 1978*, pp. 79-86, esp. point 13, pp. 83, 84).

I was present when the Synod, not liking to be critical of such an ostensibly noble cause, was rather listlessly passing several of the recommendations. At one point a delegate, wearied of the seemingly useless procedure suggested that the next recommenda-

tions be skipped since they had already been substantially covered by previous decisions. But, no, the legislative mill must grind on — through all 19 points. After all, who could be heartless toward the plight of the world's hungry? And so we have a recommendation that several million dollars be raised to help — by doing what? That must still be determined by a committee and especially by two men, the executive director of world relief and the executive secretary of world missions.

When there is a pressing need and a responsible Christian effort to help in such a need our church members have often given and will give very generously. Recall the record of CRWRC help in disasters. But now, when the procedure is being reversed — first let everyone give and then let an elite few figure out what is to be done with the money — this looks like an irresponsible invitation to a financial debacle. Appropriating money without any clear indication as to what is to be done with it makes no sense. No one does this in his personal finances. Should we be less responsible in church business? (See II Cor. 8:19-22.) The Synod's uncritical passing of such a recommendation as this makes it the more necessary that consistories and members exercise their Christian stewardship in seeing to it that they know money will be properly used before they decide to give it. ●

Meditation

The "Luke-Warm" Reformation Church



REV. JOHN BLANKESPOOR

Do we know what it means to be children of the Reformation? Really? Are we *true* children of the forefathers of this great reformatory movement? Do our children know what the Reformation was all about? Are they taught these important parts of history?

The Reformation gave three especially important blessings. In the first place it restored to God's people the blessed truth of the sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice. Closely connected with this, God restored to the church the truth that we are justified not by works but faith only in this finished work of Christ. Not by works and faith (as many confessed them) still less by the popish mass, but by faith alone. And last but not least the Reformation gave to the church again

the precious Word of God. Through the Word the church, of course, receives the former two, namely, faith in the finished work of Christ.

How precious this Word was to the saints of that age! Some paid as much as five hundred dollars, for one hand-written copy of the Bible. Others would rent the Bible for one or two hours per day. As time went on all kinds of commentaries were written; people studied because they were interested in the Word. And we see special providence at work here in that just at this time the printing press was invented. This was a flourishing period for the church. Its zeal and courage were amazing, even in the face of satanic opposition. Hearts were on fire for the Lord. They feared neither devils nor men. God alone knows how many tens of thousands suffered and even died that this fire might remain alive. And as the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church, it was this river of blood that made it possible for us to have this Word today. Let me just quote a few words that have been written about John Knox, the great leader of the Reformation in Scotland.

"What a torrent his electrified soul poured forth when he opened his mouth and protested against the wrongs done to Christ and the church. His eloquence was like a rushing river, an irresistible Niagara. He never feared the face of man. In private and in public, in the pulpit and through the press he re-proved kings, princes, judges and nobles for their sins. He did his best work when he met them face to face. He was imprisoned, yet four years spent in jail, eating bad bread, breathing foul air, sleeping on a hard bed, groping in darkness, lonesome in his cell, brought him no regret for preaching Christ. From prison he went into banishment and from banishment home to heaven. In his illness he was asked if he desired the return of health. No, not for twenty worlds was his spirited reply."

This is a description of the light and life of the Reformation. So it shone in the hearts of thousands of sinners who had learned to know the Christ of the Word.

Laodicea

What a difference we observe between that Reformation church and the church described in Revelation 3:14-22.

Laodicea was a congregation in Asia Minor, a church of "peace" and plenty, living in a city of abundance. This in itself should already cause us to take notice. Spurgeon said that prosperity was the greatest trial and danger of the church.

The Laodiceans said that they were rich, increased with goods, and had need of nothing. Theirs was a congregation that was well satisfied. Of course, they might admit theoretically that they were not perfect. After all we're still human, and on this side of the grave. That's how such people often talk. They were rich and satisfied with their professed love to God and to one another, with their church services, the attendance, the offering, the works of mercy, activities in the church and the general life of her members.

There was no real awareness of need. And this is always bad, because the Christian is always in great need. And he must know it, confess it, and do something to fill that need. But the Laodiceans felt that they lacked nothing. They were comfortable, as many church people can be. There was no conscious daily need of admonition, of repentance, confession and improvement. They had "arrived." Surely they had vastly improved the Christianity of their fathers. Theirs was a self-satisfied church, complacent, with a form of godliness, but lacking spiritual power.

They didn't hear the words of the Old Testament prophet, as they are echoed throughout the ages, "Woe to those who are at ease in Zion."

Therefore Christ said that this church was luke-warm. And anything that is luke-warm is nauseating. Few people can drink luke-warm water. Christ therefore was ready to spit her out of His mouth.

It is this Laodicean spirit that pervades the church-world of today, not the least in our own beloved country. It is the spirit of formalism, of being contented with present conditions. And much of this is brought on by materialism; let us never forget this.

Where in general is the light of the Reformation today? Ignorance of the very principles of this great movement is nothing short of appalling. Of course, we have our Sunday worship services, catechism and Sunday school classes, Christian day schools, mission programs, various church activities. And for these we are and want to be thankful. But with them all we usually are quite well satisfied. There is little real fire and zeal for the Lord, for the truth of the Word. So little do we feel the need, real need of more spiritual power and strength. In general there is little interest in the doctrines of the church, and in the very knowledge of the Bible itself. Usually only material things and the increase of them enthrall people today. Just listen, if you can to the daily conversation of people, church people. What do they talk about? Generally very little reading is done. And unless people have special burdens or problems, most of them are quite well satisfied. Smug complacency and lack of spiritual fervor are the termites that gnaw away at the very foundation of the church and true spirituality.

In the dark ages of history the light went out, humanly speaking, because the church had no Bible. But worse than that today, the light is growing dim with an abundance of Bibles in our possession.

I will spit you out of my mouth, says Christ.

The Great Lack

What was really wrong with Laodicea? This, says the Lord, that she didn't really know that she was wretched, and miserable and poor, blind and naked. Read verse 17.

In these words we find a true diagnosis of the spiritual condition of that church as well as of the churches in general today. The sinner and Christian must see that he is in need, great need. And when we lose this awareness of need we must take inventory of ourselves. We must never be satisfied with our-

selves. What do we really need? As sinners we need Christ. In the words of the Catechism, there is only one comfort for man and that is to belong to Christ with body and soul, in life and death. True knowledge of Christ gives zeal, life and love. When our real need is satisfied with the knowledge of this Christ we are not luke-warm church members, with a mere form of religion, but we are alive as new creations in Christ. . . .

True children of the Reformation pray daily, "Fill our empty cups Lord, with Your forgiveness, with Your love, with Your promises and all Your blessings." Such people are alive. Such people can sing, Faith of our Fathers, living still. . . .

THE SCHOOL'S CALLING TO TEACH THE CHILDREN TO KEEP THE WAY OF THE LORD

REV. DAVID ENGELSMA

Our attention was called to this excellent speech on the subject of Christian education given by Rev. David Engelsma of South Holland, Illinois, at the October, 1977, Protestant Reformed Teachers Institute and later printed in their March, 1978, *Perspective* magazine. We reprint it with their permission. This semi-annual publication, of which Miss Agatha Lubbers is Editor, is one with which teachers and others especially interested in Christian education might profitably become acquainted. (It is available for \$2 per year at Covenant Christian High School, 1401 Ferndale Ave., S.W., Grand Rapids, MI 49504).

It was my privilege to receive my grade school education from the third grade on in a Protestant Reformed School. The memories of this training are overwhelmingly favorable, but I also have certain bad memories concerning this training. All of these bad memories have to do with what I consider have been a shortcoming in the school, a shortcoming as regards teaching the children to live a Christian life. I all too distinctly remember, for example, that almost all of us children in the upper grades at one time carried on a campaign of cruelty against a certain child, a campaign that went on and on, as I remember, and that consisted of ostracizing that child and constantly referring to that child, to that child's face, in such terms as "stinky," meanwhile holding our noses. I also recall with sorrow that we boys in the upper grades would engage in fist fights, not an infrequent blow-up that you can expect from boys of that age, but a regular thing. Those fist fights often resulted in bloody noses and even broken hands. They would even occur in the classroom during the lunch hour.

I do not intend to criticize the teachers concerning these things because they were our sins, part of the sins of youth that often we have prayed God not to remember against us. Nor do I mean to indicate that the teachers tolerated this evil behavior. I remember very well how angry a certain teacher was when she caught us fist-fighting on the playground (to this day I can see her blazing eyes) and that she chastised us for that sin by making us stay in and write lines. What troubles me, however, is that no matter how I search my memory I can not recall that there ever was any warning to us boys that by this behavior we were guilty of murder in breaking the sixth commandment of the law of God, or that there was ever any exhortation of us to love each other as fellow citizens of the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ. Nor do I remember that anyone ever addressed us, singly or collectively, concerning our destruction of that student whom we were attacking, perhaps even by applying the words of I Corinthians 12:23ff. to the situation, words, you will remember, that have to do with bestowing more abundant honor upon members of the body of Christ which we think to be less honorable, and words that conclude that there should be no schisms in the body but that the members should have the same care one for another.

Looking back, I wonder whether there was much emphasis on teaching the children to live a Christian life. I wonder whether the school rather was not viewed as a place where subjects were taught and where all of the emphasis lay upon the fact that those subjects had to be taught in harmony with the faith that we hold dear, the Reformed faith. Perhaps, I am wrong. Perhaps my memory is faulty. Perhaps, these admonitions were given, but we did not let them make any impression on us. I hope I am wrong. But if it were the case that there was not this emphasis on living the Christian life, there was a serious lack in the education itself, for the Christian school has the calling to teach the children to walk in the way of the Lord.

It is my conviction that the Christian school has an important role in teaching the children to live a responsible Christian life. You may describe this calling in different ways. You may use the terminology of the topic assigned to me this morning: "Teaching the children to live a responsible Christian life." You might also speak of teaching the children to keep God's commandments which is how Psalm 78 puts it. I prefer to use the words of Genesis 18:19, ". . . teaching the children to keep the way of the Lord." God speaks to Abraham here and says, "For I know him (that is, Abraham), that he will command his children and his household after him and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he has spoken of him."

Not only is the teaching of the children to keep the way of the Lord a role that the school plays, but I contend that it is a solemn, important, divine calling upon the Christian school and upon every teacher in our Christian schools. That this is so should be plain,

first of all, from the fact that it is simply impossible for the school to refrain from teaching the children to keep the way of the Lord. There is evidence of that impossibility. For one thing there will be instruction concerning Christian living in the very example that the teacher himself sets personally. The teacher will display, and cannot help but display, love for God and obedience unto God's law—for example, his faithfulness to his task, his fairness, his kindness to the students, especially to those who are in some kind of distress, his godly speech, and the like. In his life among the students, the Christian school teacher will display these characteristics, and they will be instructive for the children regarding their own life. Also, there will be such instruction in the formal aspects of the education. I refer to such things as the fact that students are expected to be on time; the fact that the students are required to do their assignments and to do them in the allotted time; the fact that they are forbidden to interfere with the work of the other students; and the fact that they are required to obey the ordinary commands of the teacher, even such a command as "take out your books now." The very structure of the teaching itself teaches the children to keep the way of the Lord. In addition, there will be such instruction in the unavoidable discipline that goes on in the school. The teacher rebukes, warns, and chastises. In every rebuke there is an implied judgment to certain behavior that that behavior is evil and an implied judgment on other behavior that that behavior is good. This all by itself teaches the children to keep the way of the Lord. Besides, teaching the children to keep the ways of God is an integral part of the actual teaching of the subject material. Unavoidably, you will be teaching the children to keep the way of the Lord. You cannot possibly teach history without condemning revolution and the idolatry of Greece and Rome. You cannot possibly teach literature without saying something about the deification of man, about despair and hope, about vengeance, and about guilt.

Such is the impossibility of the schools not teaching the children to keep the way of the Lord that the alternative is that the teaching teaches them to despise the way of the Lord. It is either/or. Either the school teaches them to keep the way of the Lord or the school must necessarily teach them to despise the way of the Lord. That is after all what goes on day after day, year in and year out, in the public schools of our land. We should remember this if we are inclined for some reason to minimize or to remove the teaching of the children to keep Jehovah's way. This then cannot be the issue—whether it is possible not to teach the children to keep the ways of the Lord. It is simply impossible not to do this in the Christian school.

Is such teaching merely an unavoidable but completely secondary aspect of the work of the school? Is this instruction a sort of accidental by-product of the school's labor? Or is it the case that this teaching itself is an important part of the school's, that is the teacher's, task? Is it even the case that this is the

teacher's calling from God? Could it be that teaching the children to keep the way of the Lord is the main purpose for which the school has been established, and that every other aspect of the work of the school, including the teaching of the subjects and the development of the child's natural abilities, are subservient to this spiritual-ethical, practical instruction?

How we answer these questions will make all the difference in the world as to what kind of schools we have and as to what kind of work the teachers give themselves to do. If our answer is the former, that is, if our answer is that teaching the children to keep the way of Jehovah is merely an accidental, secondary aspect of the school's calling, we will not concern ourselves overly much that there is a student who is called "Stinky," as long as all of the students, and "Stinky," get good grades in all of the subjects of the curriculum. We will not make much of it that "glorious" Greece was an abominable pest house of idolatry and homosexuality. Indeed a student may never even hear, much less have impressed upon him, that this was the truth about "glorious" Greece, for the only concern of the teacher will be that the student knows all of the Greek city states, the names of all the philosophers and orators, and the names of all the gods in Greece's pantheon.

But if the answer to our questions is the latter, that is, if we maintain that one of the main aspects of the calling of the teacher in the Christian school is to teach the children to keep the way of the Lord, that this, in fact, is the main calling of the Christian school, then we will stop all the wheels of the machinery of education, if necessary, until the students confess their sin of hatred of the neighbor and be reconciled to "Stinky." The teaching of the history of Greece and Rome will, without sacrificing any knowledge of the facts, impress upon the students the judgment of God on the ungodliness and unrighteousness of those men, which teaching, implicitly or explicitly, will be accompanied by instruction of the covenant children how themselves to live uprightly in the world before the face of God.

Our answer, in the Protestant Reformed Christian schools — genuine Christian schools, must be that the school has a calling to teach the children to keep the way of Jehovah, indeed that this is the main calling of the school. This is the task to which all of the other admittedly important tasks are subservient. The main task of you teachers then is not academic and intellectual. The main task is spiritual-ethical and practical in nature.

The proof of this is, first of all, the history of Christian day-school education. The Christian school did not begin with us. I has a long and honorable history. The testimony of that history without exception is that the Christian school must teach the children to keep the way of Jehovah. The Christian school must teach the children to live responsible Christian lives in the world. Because I am going to be a student of brevity this morning, believe it or not, I will bring up only one instance from history that

substantiates this assertion. That instance is the original version of Art. 21 of the church order of Dordt. You will remember that the present version of that article reads as follows: "The consistory shall see to it that there are good Christian schools in which the parents have their children instructed according to the demands of the covenant." That was not how the article originally read; originally the article said this: "Everywhere consistories shall see to it that there are good schoolmasters who shall not only instruct the children in reading, writing, languages, and the liberal arts, but likewise in godliness and the Catechism!" Ah, there you have it — "but likewise in godliness and the Catechism!" That article was worded in such a way as to ward off a very real danger. That very real danger is that only the subjects be taught and that the schoolmaster only concern himself with the development of the natural abilities of the students. That article was worded in such a way as to place strong emphasis on godliness and the Heidelberg Catechism; godliness and the Catechism are mentioned last in the article. Now, this perfectly captures the spirit of the entire history of Christian education. I admit that we no longer have this version of the Church Order. It has been changed. However, the reason for that change was not opposition to the teaching of godliness in the Christian school but rather opposition to the parochialism that was implied in that original version — the consistory shall see to it that there are good schoolmasters. That went in the direction of parochialism. Because of our clearer insight that Christian school education must be parental, this version was changed somewhat. Nevertheless our present version of this article really incorporates that same insistence on the teaching of godliness, for our present version speaks of good Christian schools *according to the demand of the covenant*. The demand of the covenant is the demand for teaching the children to keep the way of Jehovah. This is plain in every passage of Scripture that calls the parents to teach their children. This is plain, therefore, in every passage of Scripture on which our Christian schools are founded. Every passage not only mentions this as an element of the instruction that parents must give their children, but also maintains that this shall be the content and purpose of all of the instruction that parents give their children. The content and purpose of the instruction that covenant parents give their children must be this, that we teach them to live rightly.

Let me briefly illustrate this from several representative passages of Holy Scripture. First of all, this is evident in the well-known sixth chapter of Deuteronomy, verses four and following. This passage calls parents in Israel to teach their children diligently. We read that parents must teach "them" diligently to their children, namely, these words of verse six, which words are these: "The Lord our God is one Lord, and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart and with all thy mind and with all thy strength." That is what the parents in Israel must teach diligently to their children. They must teach

their children: "Jehovah our God is one Jehovah, and you must love him with all that you are." Negatively, the purpose of this teaching, according to later verses in Deuteronomy 6, is that we and our children not forget Jehovah — not forget Jehovah when we are solidly established in our land flowing with milk and honey, in the midst of our flourishing farms and industries, and then, inevitably, go after the other gods. This is the purpose of the instruction of our children.

This is also evident from the Psalm which was read this morning, Psalm 78, the first eight verses. This, of course, is a grand covenant Psalm. We have sung it so many times at baptisms, at confessions of faith, and at convocations and graduations of the Christian schools. This Psalm insists that fathers must teach the Lord's praises to their children with the purpose, according to verse 7, "that they might set their hope in God and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments."

Of the Book of Proverbs, nothing has to be said, because the practical nature of the instruction that the believing father gives to his child is simply there to be seen by anyone.

Also Genesis 18:19 brings out clearly that we must instruct our children to keep the way of the Lord. "For I know him," God says there, "that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord." Abraham's total command of his children and household has the nature and purpose to teach his household to keep the way of Jehovah, which is then further defined as doing justice and judgment.

These passages are applicable to the Christian school. They constitute the very basis of our schools. We may not adopt this basis and then elide the unique content and purpose of the instruction that is proposed in this basis. True, the calling in these passages is directed to parents. The parents must see to it that the children keep God's commandments. However, the Christian school represents the parents' delegating the carrying out of this calling in certain respects to teachers who come to stand in their place. When the parents do this, when they give over this calling in certain respects to the Christian school, the parents cannot change the nature and purpose of the calling. That calling is laid down forever with finality by God, and that calling is: "Teach the children to keep My way."

This kind of instruction is desperately needed. It is needed by our children. Of course, I do not mean that they need this instruction in the school in place of instruction in the home and the church, but I mean that they need this in the school along side of that same instruction which they get in the home and in the church. That is due to the sinful nature of our children. The need for this is sharpened by the times in which we live. On every hand, by every means, our children are tempted to depart from the way of the Lord. The world is a gigantic school. It attempts to teach our children to depart from God's way in every form of ungodliness and unrighteousness. In

the midst of it stands a school that teaches them to keep Jehovah's way.

We may briefly answer the question, How does the teacher do this? In the first place, this calling to teach the children to keep God's way must frame the teacher's view of his task. How does the teacher look at his task? What is his perspective when he steps back and looks at himself and what he is doing? He must conceive his task to be teaching the children not only to *know* God's way, but also to *keep* God's way. This is the word Jehovah used in Genesis 18:19: "*keep*." The teacher must see himself and his relationship to the child more as a master in relationship to the master's disciples than as a lecturer to his audience. And even that does not say enough. He must view himself as the parent in whose place he stands, bringing up these children to keep the ways of the Lord.

Having this view of his task, the Christian school teacher will teach obedience of life, first, in and with the subjects of the curriculum. When I say that it is calling of the teacher to do this spiritual-ethical, practical work, I do not, of course, intend that he dispense with the subjects and replace them with courses in ethics. I do not even mean that the Christian school should add a course in Christian living. Not at all. The school must teach the subjects. Yes, but it must teach the subjects so, that every thought of the child is in captivity to Christ and thus the child keeps the way of Jehovah with his mind. Keeping the way of Jehovah is not something that is only done with the body or even primarily done with the body. After all, Deuteronomy 6 demands that the child love the Lord his God with his mind. This is basic to any child's keeping the way of Jehovah with his body. What are his thoughts? On what way is he walking with his soul? That will determine how he behaves himself with his body. To keep the way of the Lord is taught by teaching every subject in the light of Holy Scripture and to the end that God be glorified. In and with the teaching of the subjects, there may be no hesitation to draw out for the students such practical implication as the good and bad use of music — what music to listen to and what music not to listen to; what kind of books to read and what kind of books and magazines to avoid; and the like.

Having the right view of his task, the Christian school teacher will teach the children to obey God's commandments, secondly, by godly discipline. I mean here not only discipline in the narrower sense of chastisement, but also discipline in the broader sense of an ordering of the child's life. It includes such a thing as seeing to it that a tall girl does not slump, but confidently maintains her posture. The teacher must see the necessity to rebuke and chasten not as some extraneous matter to be gotten out of the way as quickly as possible so that he can go on with the main course of teaching subjects, but as an essential aspect of his task, as the reason why he is there, as the reason why the child is there. He will handle all matters of discipline, then, wisely and carefully. The

teacher will rebuke in love; he will condemn error in terms of God's law and in light of the covenant standing of the children. When he calls them to obedience, whether the obedience of taking out their books or the obedience of loving one another on the playground, he will do so in terms of their gratitude toward their covenant God for bringing them out of the bondage of sin and death through Jesus Christ. Certainly, there will be some matters that will need to be given over to the parents. Maybe, there will be matters that have to be referred to the pastor of the church, with the consent of the parents. But it is impossible to turn all disciplinary matters which arise in school over to parents and pastors. Even if this were possible, it would not be preferable; for the simple fact is, as every parent knows, that there are many things that must be dealt with when they occur, and, if they are not dealt with when they occur, it is really impossible later on to deal with them at all. This is an awesome responsibility. But what else do we mean when we say that the Christian school teacher stands in the place of the parent? To say that is to acknowledge the awesome responsibility of every teacher in the Christian school. He is responsible for nothing less than rearing the covenant child to walk in God's way and not to depart from it. Like the parent, the teacher who takes this seriously trembles at his calling.

Thirdly, as I have already indicated, you teach the children to keep the Lord's way by your own example. The love of God has to be on your forehead, as it has to be on the forehead of the parent in whose place you stand.

The school, then, is not only preparatory for life in the future, but it is the place of living, the place where the child lives today. The school, then, is not a think tank for brains, but a place of the rearing of the whole covenant child.

If this be so, if the school has this calling, teachers are required who themselves know, love, and walk in the way of Jehovah. Required are teachers who are one with us parents in our regard for this ultimate goal of all of the upbringing of the children. It is not so important to me what kind of a person you are, if you are only going to be teaching my children how much 2 and 2 are; but if you are going to be teaching my children to keep the way of the Lord, then I care a great deal about your spiritual qualifications, whether you are one with me in your knowledge of the way of the Lord, whether you stand with me in the warnings and prohibitions and exhortation that I give my children concerning the Christian life. I will not stand for it that you and I work at cross purposes in this vital matter.

It is striking that the requirement in Scripture for those who teach covenant children is that they themselves are keeping the way of the Lord. Think of Deuteronomy 6 once more. How does that begin? "And these words shall be in thine heart." Only then does it add: "thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children." How does Genesis 18 begin? "And I know him." This is what Jehovah says about Abraham, "I know Abraham." This does not mean that God

knows that Abraham is going to command his children so that they will keep the way of the Lord. The text does not speak of God knowing *something*, but it speaks of God knowing *someone*. God knows *Abraham*, knows him with the personal knowledge of electing love. Only as someone known by God can and will Abraham then go on to command his household so that they do justice and judgment.

To carry out the high calling of commanding the children to keep Jehovah's way, one must himself be keeping the way of Jehovah. So the Christian school teacher must have spiritual qualifications as well as academic qualifications. I have no hesitation to say that the spiritual qualifications are the primary qualifications as far as the Christian school teacher is concerned. The primary qualification is that he be a godly man, or that she be a godly woman. What we need, and, thank God, what we have, are good school masters and good school marms, good because they have been born again and because they are indwelt by the good and Holy Spirit of Jesus Christ. This godliness must be exercised, must be daily exercised, by the Christian school teacher who keeps himself, by the grace of God, in Jehovah's way. Thus, he can teach the children to keep the way of the Lord.

Martin J. Wyngaarden

1891-1978

PETER DE JONG

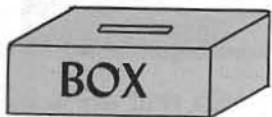
It is fitting that the Reformed Fellowship note the death of one of its members, long-time professor of Calvin Theological Seminary, Dr. Martin J. Wyngaarden. Through the courtesy of his daughter, Lillian, Mrs. Van Slot, we summarize some of the facts of his life.

He was born July 4, 1891 in Oostburg, Wisconsin, to Rev. Jacob Wyngaarden and his wife Johanna (Tien) who had been a school teacher near Graafschap, Michigan. Martin made confession of faith at the age of 17 at New Era, Mich., where his father was pastor. On graduating from John Calvin High School and Junior College he became principal and taught two years at the Sioux Center, Iowa, Christian School. There he met his future wife, Johanna Kempers, who later taught in the same school. After receiving an A.B. from the University of Washington in Seattle he attended Calvin Seminary, intending to become a pastor after a post-graduate year at Princeton. At Princeton Dr. R. D. Wilson advised him to specialize in Old Testament and Semitics, which he did first at Princeton and then for two years at the University of Pennsylvania, in Philadelphia, where he received the Ph.D. degree in Semitics. At the U. of Pennsylvania he met opposition to his evangelical faith in the threat of a professor who warned that he would

not be given his degree if he maintained his faith in the Virgin Birth of Christ. Characteristic of his evangelical faithfulness throughout his career was Martin Wyngaarden's refusal to be intimidated on this point.

In 1923 Dr. Wyngaarden was ordained and installed by his father in the church at Tracy, Iowa, with a sermon on Rev. 1:16 and he preached an inaugural sermon on Phil. 3:10, 11. The following year he became professor of Old Testament at Calvin Seminary where he served for 37 years. He wrote three books, his thesis on *The Syriac Version of the Book of Daniel, The Future of the Kingdom in Prophecy and Fulfillment*, and *The Glory of Christ in his Three States, Preexistent, Earthly and Exalted*. Some of us older ministers remember him, until recently the last of our seminary professors who was still living, for his unwavering effort to be faithful to the Lord and His Word against the attacks of prevailing unbelief. "Remember them that had the rule over you, men that spake unto you the world of God; and considering the issue of their life, imitate their faith" (Heb. 13:7)

OUR QUESTION



REV. HARLAN G. VANDEN EINDE

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

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

"SICKNESS"

From a Bible Study Group in Iowa comes a question about sickness. "Does God allow or cause sickness to come to us or does He allow the devil to do

this to us? Does God cause us to be sick to test us?" And in further comments, a reference is made to Job as an illustration.

For me to try to exhaust all the ramifications of this question seems well-nigh impossible, for it is, in some sense, of the nature of a mystery. But the main concern of the questioner appears to be how we are to view and respond to human sickness and suffering. In the case of Job, to whom reference is made in the letter of the reader, the Bible is quite clear in pointing out that the devil was the instigator of Job's difficulties, with the permission of God (see Job 1:12 and Job 2:6).

A question of equal importance to that of whether or not God actively sends sickness is this: what is sickness? and what is the reason for the reality of such a thing as sickness in the world?

Surely, sickness was never intended by God in His creation. He created all things good. Sickness was no more purposed by God in His creation than was death. Yet both are a reality. In fact, death is spoken of in the Bible as "the last enemy that shall be destroyed" (I Cor. 15:26), and sickness and illness often precede death.

So sickness, as does death, finds its cause in sin. Sin has wrought havoc with God's good creation, causing it to groan in pain (Rom. 8:22), and making us subject to all manner of physical and mental sicknesses. Isaiah prophesied about the holy city in which there would be no more sin in chapter 33:24, "And the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick: the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity." So too, in the vision of the new heaven and earth as seen by John: "and death shall be no more; neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain, any more" (Rev. 7:4).

Sickness, therefore, is not natural for us, but a consequence of sin in the world. This is not to say that every sickness is a result of personal sin. It may be so, but not necessarily. For example, we cannot wreck our body with strong drink, and then say that God has done this to us. We cannot waste our goods in riotous living as did the prodigal son, and then say God has sent us adversity. Our suffering and sickness may come from personal sin.

But not always is it so. The disciples once asked Jesus the question: "Master, who sinned, this man, or his parents, that he should be born blind?" And Jesus answered, "Neither did this man sin, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him" (John 9:2, 3). This particular "sickness," if we may call it that, was not a result of God's creative work, that is, not "natural" in God's good creation, but one of the consequences of the sin of the human race. God did take this particular ailment, however, which He permitted him to have (and of which all of us are worthy) and use it for His glory.

In the midst of this very difficult problem of

God's will and human illness, let us be reminded that the Word of God assures us that He "worketh all things after the counsel of His will" (Eph. 1:11). That His "will" also includes sickness and death is seen from such passages as Amos 3:6, ". . . shall evil befall a city, and Jehovah hath not done it?" and Deuteronomy 32:39, "See not that I, even I, am he, and there is no god with me: I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal; and there is none that can deliver out of my hand." It was God who brought the plagues as judgments upon the Egyptians, and occasionally also upon the Israelites (Numbers 11:33 and II Sam. 24:15). He struck King Jehoram with an incurable disease (II Chron. 21:18) and in a similar way dealt with King Herod (Acts 12:23). In spite of many voices today speaking to the contrary, the Bible does teach the absolute sovereign rule of God over all things, including sickness. We as His people are taught to find comfort in this truth of His sovereign rule, however, and because no sparrow falls to the ground without His will, and the hairs of our head are all numbered, His exhortation to us is: "fear not therefore" (Matt. 10:29-31, Luke 12:6, 7).

In summary, let me say this. Though God is in control of it, He is not the cause of sickness; sin is. Without sin, no sickness would be thinkable. Everyone of us, therefore, has not so much as a claim to one day of health. But God in His grace often spares us from what we deserve; and when He does not, He has the glorious purpose in mind of refining us (I Peter 1:6,7), and chastening us as His children (Heb. 12).

I conclude with a quotation from an old but profitable book by Abraham Kuyper, *When Thou Sittest In Thine House*, p. 373, ". . . from its nature sickness is disposed to make small what was too high, to turn self-confidence into confidence in God, to place our own work and God's work in more accurate proportions before the eye of our faith, and no less to awaken the pity and compassion of others, the love and sympathy of many, to rouse into action what lay slumbering in the brother-heart, yea, above all, along these ways to make great and glorious the Name of that Knower and Operator of hearts, Who through the dark cloud of suffering makes to shine forth so sunnily and cherishingly the glow of His holy compassion."

*Strange gift indeed – a Thorn to prick,
To pierce into the very quick,
To cause perpetual sense of pain.
Strange gift. And yet, 'twas given for gain.
And so, whate'er thy thorn may be,
From God accept it willingly.
But reckon Christ – His life – His power
To keep, in thy most trying hour.*

– AUTHOR UNKNOWN

Reformed Theological College of Nigeria

July 23, 1978

Reformed Fellowship, Inc.
P.O. Box 7383
Grand Rapids, MI 49510

Dear Loyal Friends,

On behalf of the Reformed Theological College of Nigeria, I want to thank you for your gifts of \$1,300.00 and \$1,000.00 for the development of the seminary's facilities. Because of your continuing concern for our progress and your expression of that concern in the way of these generous financial gifts, RTCN is growing physically, and, hence, is able to offer more opportunities to young men who desire to train for the Gospel ministry.



Enclosed are two photographs. One is of our new bus capable of transporting eighteen (18) of our students and which is being used regularly in our program of bush evangelism. The second photograph is of the new dormitory for married students which is capable of housing four additional men and their families. Your gifts has made these a reality!



We are thankful to God and also to you for the privilege of raising up a seminary in Western Africa loyal to the Word of God and the Reformed Faith.

Sincerely,

SID ANDERSON
Teacher, RTCN

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

ALL IS NOT WELL IN THE CRC

Anyone who is not a stranger in Jerusalem knows, to say it mildly, that all is not well in the Christian Reformed Church. Much has been written about this condition and in reading this again and again, I recall the Word of the Lord spoken by His servant Hosea in chapter 4:6, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge."

Doesn't the Church know its proper position any more? In Amos 3:2 the Lord said, "You only have I known of all the families of the earth, therefore will I punish you for all your iniquities. Israel as a nation had rejected Christ. Standing before Pontius Pilate, they shouted, "His blood be upon us and upon our children." These words have been fulfilled in a terrible way throughout history. Many of us still remember how forty years ago Adolf Hitler exterminated millions of Jews, and they are still surrounded by enemies.

The words of the prophet Amos still address us today as the New Testamentic Israel, the Church of Jesus Christ. The apostle Peter tells us the same in I Peter 2:9, "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people, that ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light." "Ye are my witnesses" said Jehovah God to Israel through the mouth of Isaiah. "This people have I formed for myself, they shall show forth my praise" (Is. 43:21). These words sum up the whole task of the people of God in this world. What a privilege by the grace of God to belong to the Church for whom He sacrificed His only begotten Son, the Church He loves so much, that if one would touch it, he would be touching the apple of God's eye. "Zion on the holy hills, God thy Maker loves thee well."

But what a responsibility. God hates sin and it grieves Him much when His people commit spiritual adultery with the world. He wants to keep His church pure. That is Scripture everywhere. In the days of Isaiah, Hosea, and Amos, the nation of Israel experienced great prosperity, but spiritually, it was in a sad condition. Riches and affluence are always Satan's tools with which he tries

to destroy the church. Do we not read in Proverbs 30:8, "Give me neither poverty, nor riches . . ."? The reformed genius, Dr. A. Kuyper, once said that in Jesus' heart there dwells no hatred against the rich, but rather a deep sympathy for their pitiable state, for the service of mammon is exceedingly difficult. Sooner indeed would a camel go through the eye of a needle than a rich man enter the Kingdom of Heaven. (That is good for us in America to ponder too.) We as part of the western civilization have reached a standard of living unknown in history and the consequences are already visible.

For many, life on earth here looks good; why should we look for a better country? (Heb. 11:16). Yet our citizenship is in heaven (Phil 3:20). We are pilgrims and strangers here on earth. It is a tragedy that the church has let go of this and even sneers at this in our day. There is also an alarming lack of the knowledge of the Scripture in our day and age. Personal Bible study becomes more and more a rarity, with sports events, etc., taking priority. Ours is a pleasure-mad society. The words of Paul, that physical exercise is of little value, are completely ignored. "Men have become lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God" (II Tim. 3:4).

Today in many churches the so-called new hermeneutics is running rampant, and the CRC is no exception. THE OUTLOOK (*Torch and Trumpet*), has tried to defend the Reformed faith for many years, but are we not fighting a losing battle; it seems to me that we want to reform the church on our own terms of human philosophy and not on Scriptural terms. We are more concerned about love towards our brother than the love of God towards His church. Are we not aware of the seriousness and power of sin?

Among other things, the apostle Paul said in Corinthians 5, that sin in the church works like leaven. It leavens the entire church. Sin spreads like cancer. Paul goes on to say that if there is only one sinner that doesn't want to repent in the church, deliver him unto Satan. Don't keep company with him, don't even eat with him. This is strong language.

Today, many have a form of godliness, but deny the power thereof. In II Timothy 3:15 we read, "from such turn away," and in Revelation 18 we also note, "Come out of Babylon (the nominal church) my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins." Finally, John who is called the apostle of love, writes in his second epistle, "If there come any unto you and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house. . . ." Are we not interested too much in the quantity rather than the quality of the church? Although we read in Revelation 7 that the total number of the elect is called a great multitude, it is also true that throughout the ages, the church is called a small remnant. When this earth was destroyed the first time, only eight

people were saved, and Scripture tells us that the days of Noah will return. During the time of the prophet Elijah, there were only seven thousand in the entire nation of Israel who didn't bow unto Baal. Christ Himself called the church a little flock in Luke 12:32. "Many are called but few are chosen."

If Luther and Calvin had taken the same attitude which many take today, we might still be in the Roman Catholic Church. Recently a CRC minister wrote that the church is more influenced by the world than most of us realize and want to admit. The language of the antithesis has largely become foreign among us.

In our materialistic church of today, the words of the prophet Habakkuk also almost become foreign to us. He said in chapter 3:17, 18, "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines, the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold and there shall be no herd in the stalls, yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation."

*As long as heaven stands on pillars firm
and sure*

*So long shall David's seed through
endless years endure*

*But if his children forsake my law
appointed,*

*And walk not in the ways decreed by
mine Anointed;*

*Then truly will I come in holy
indignation*

*And chastise them with rods for all their
provocation.*

HERMAN WOLTJER
Zeeland, Michigan

SIGNS OF THE LORD'S RETURN

The days immediately preceding the Savior's return shall be perilous, according to II Timothy 3 and Matthew 24. With potentially world-destroying missiles in the hands of some of the world's most wicked rulers, and hatreds general, could times ever have been more perilous than now?

Then too, since Noah's flood could there ever have been a time when opportunities for eating, drinking and merry-making have abounded as currently? And the ever increasing number of alcoholics and drug addicts are but a few of the horrifying results. At the same time such calamities as famines and pestilences are raging in many regions, as was also prophesied.

Do you believe that such extreme iniquities as homosexuality and abortion, both of which now run into the millions in our land, will never be punished? To believe that you must close your eyes and ears to the teachings of secular history as well as those of God's Word. God's Word says, "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God" (Ps. 9:17).

When also considering that all the nations are floundering on the verge of bankruptcy (our own included) and considering all the strange phenomena that

are causing men's hearts to fail them for fear of the things that are coming to pass (Luke 21:26), how dare we neglect our duty to serve as watchmen upon Zions walls?

The "man of sin" referred to in II Thessalonians 2:3 who must appear first, could represent fast-growing Communism and the prophesied great apostasy is currently, clearly and universally evident. Although we do not yet experience tribulations they are endured by Christians in other lands, as Corrie Ten Boom has been reminding us.

Finally, could the materially prosperous times that preceded the world's first judgment, namely the flood, ever have found as close a parallel as they do in ours? Therefore the Lord's return in judgment could now be as sudden and unexpected as was the flood in those times, coming, as is a lightning flash (Matt. 24:17) and as "a thief in the night," "in such an hour as ye think not" (Matt. 24:43, 44).

REV. J. E. BRINK
Kalamazoo, Michigan

LOVING MY MOTHER

I loved my Mother dearly. She gave me all the love a Mother could ever give any child. She brought me to Christ. She took very seriously the question, "Do you promise and intend to instruct this child, as soon as he is able to understand, in the aforesaid doctrine (God's Word) and the articles of the Christian faith) and cause him to be instructed therein to the utmost of your power?"

Indeed, she was faithful in keeping that promise. She nurtured me until one day I could appear, first before the consistory and then before the whole congregation, to declare my faith in God publicly and claim the covenant promise of my baptism as my very own.

Even then her concern for me did not end. She was deeply interested in my spiritual development. Continually I was admonished to grow in sanctification, to become better acquainted with God's holy infallible Word, and apply that Word to every area of my life.

How thankful I was that she continually encouraged me, until even at the ripe age of thirty-seven I returned to the class room where I struggled for five and a half years until I finally graduated from our Seminary. How I appreciated her encouragement throughout those long years. And even during the times when things didn't go so well, Mother continually told me that I should prepare myself for the ministry of the Word and Sacraments.

My Mother was really thrilled when, by God's grace, I was first declared a candidate and then ordained as a Pastor of a local congregation to serve as one of the Master's undershepherds.

Yes, Mother was happy, and proud. She had done her job well.

Then in 1967 Mother began to get ill. I think deep down she realized what caused her illness, but she refused any

treatment. Slowly but surely her condition worsened. Then in 1972 it took a more serious turn.

This time there was no doubt at all as to her condition; it was even diagnosed as terminal. Some of her children encouraged her to take the proper medicine; she did so off and on, but she listened to those who had little knowledge about proper medication but who had talked to Drs. Barth and Bultmann. The result was that her condition deteriorated rapidly. She went into a coma. On June 21, 1978 at about 4:30 P.M. the doctors gave up all hope.

Today, I and a small number of relatives still haven't given up hope, for we realize that all things are possible with God.

If things continue the way they are, Mother can't live much longer. The time seems to be close at hand when we may have to say good-bye to her. If that should happen we will have to look for another mother. There are many young children in our family who need a mother's love and concern. But I am sure that God in His good providence will provide whatever we need.

One thing is sure; my Father certainly loves us. He knows all the efforts that have been made to restore Mother. In fact, He has provided the remedies. But He has told us often that we will have to choose between His remedies and those of relatives who think that they know more than He does. With Father's help we will try to do the very best for our Mother. If God should be so gracious as to bring her back to health, she will have to learn to listen to Father much more than she has done in the past few years. That is the only way she can be the Bride she was meant to be.

Mother, if you can hear me, listen again to Father. He is the Only One who can help you. Won't you do that, Mother? Please?

A concerned son,
REV. FRED GUNNINK
Coopersville CRC

POINTED PARAGRAPHS

If I had to recommend only one book for a layman to read as an introduction to prophecy, I would by all means recommend Paul Erb's *Bible Prophecy*, a paperback put out by the Herald Press (Scottsdale, Pa. 15683). It is the clearest, simplest, most solid book on prophecy that I know. Here is no feverish speculation about the future, but a calm, sane approach that is thoroughly Biblical. It is based on years of exegetical study, but couched in the catechetical question and answer format so that it is easy to read. What a delight! May pastors and laymen from all denominations read it and be strengthened.

EDWIN H. PALMER



A HISTORY OF PREACHING. Vol. III. From the Close of the Nineteenth Century to the Middle of the Twentieth Century (continuing the work of the Volumes I and II by Edwin C. Dargan) and American Preaching (not covered by Dargan). During the Seventeenth, Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries, by Ralph G. Turnbull. Baker Book House, Grand Rapids. 1974. 586 pages. \$12.95 (\$29.95 for three volume set). Reviewed by Rev. Jerome Julien, Pastor of the First Christian Reformed Church of Pella, Iowa.

It was an ambitious project and a much needed work that Turnbull undertook. A volume such as this is not easy to write. Though it covers only a few years of the history of the Church, its writing necessitates a rather thorough acquaintance with church history, biographies of the preaching greats — and a knowledge of published sermons. And this is no small task! Further, a volume such as this is difficult to write. How far does an author go in giving critical evaluations of the theological positions taken by the preachers who are analyzed? Besides, there will always be a difference of opinion as to what men deserve the title of "preaching-great" and what men — humble and faithful though they be — do not even deserve honorable mention.

This volume is a noble attempt at fulfilling a need: a survey of twentieth century and American preaching. There are times when a judgment is made and there is an ample insight into the history of preaching. One wishes that other judgments had been made on some of the pulpit greats, rather than handing out bouquets of roses. But to make this volume more critical in nature would not have kept it in line with the other two by Dargan. Sometimes the words used do not adequately express what the author wants to say, I am sure. For instance, he writes that Charles G. Finney began as a Calvinist but later modified his position so that he retained a Calvinist vocabulary with new meanings (p. 87). Actually, to be more precise, the term Arminian should be used to explain Finney's new theological position.

Several things should be pointed out. First, an insignificant point — yet an im-

portant one if we are to be precise. Consistently the name of Alexander McLaren is written incorrectly as Alexander McLaren. Second, a more important point: the index is not always correct and several important names have been omitted. The reference to Lenski is incorrect and names such as Samuel Willard, William Taylor and Charles Hodge do not appear, though they are in the text.

Aside from these critical comments, I must laud the appearance of this volume. Perhaps you wonder who should read it. I say that every minister and prospective minister ought to read it. We can and must learn about preaching. Every other laborer studies to gain insights. We ought not shirk this part of our study. Not only do we become acquainted with others who have brought the message of the Gospel (sometimes there is a lack in Reformed circles of this knowledge) but also we learn about these men who labored faithfully in the proclamation of the Gospel. For instance, we learn that men who were capable in bringing the message were often well-read-students, if you will. Perhaps we can learn here. Further, we learn of some of the insights great preachers have had into their task. D. T. Niles it is pointed out, criticized topical preaching. He said, "The preacher has no right to waste a Sunday morning talking 'tid-bits.'" Are we listening?

Today's lack of homiletics makes this volume and volumes on the nature of preaching essential. (Incidentally, we ought to thank Baker for making available some of the standard works on preaching which have long been out of print.)

If you take time to read this volume — and if you are engaged in regular pulpit work, you must — you will meet Harry Ironside, John Henry Jowett, G. Campbell Morgan, D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, Jonathan Edwards, Albert Barnes and more. You will get an insight into their way of work. No, you will not always agree with their theology, but you will learn. Besides, this volume gives a different perspective on the history of the Church.

Again, thanks to Baker for this significant contribution to the shelf marked "Homiletics."

GOD'S HIGHER WAYS: The Birth of a Church, by Clarence W. Duff. Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, Box 817, Phillipsburg, N.J. 08865. 1977, 320 pp. plus appendices. \$7.50. Reviewed by Rev. John Mahaffry, Orthodox Presbyterian pastor, Newberg, Oregon.

Do you expect a book by a retired missionary to appeal only to those who have some special interest in the field where he served? *God's Higher Ways* deserves a far wider audience. Certainly the book ought to be read by the members and friends of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, the church which Mr. Duff served for many years in Eritrea, Ethiopia. But it should also be read by

those concerned with seeing that Christ's Great Commission is obeyed. It should be read by those who believe that the sovereignty of God is the source of, and not a barrier to, a life of obedience. The book ought to be in Christian homes and church libraries.

As the subtitle indicates, the book describes the birth of a church. The gestation was long and often difficult, but never dull. The author's frequent quotes from his correspondence and from articles written by him or his colleagues give a sense of immediacy. Yet as he writes from retirement his perspective is distant enough to evaluate the history he records.

The strands that form the history of the church are instructive. There is the determination by the mission that its goal be nothing less than the formation of a truly indigenous church. A brief "Glance at Eritrea's History" is included. The text, and especially the appendices, describe the church's debate of Biblical principles involved in establishing a mission hospital. The vital place of literature in mission work is recorded. And although the work in Eritrea, Ethiopia was under the supervision of the Foreign Missions Committee of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, the missionaries who served there came not only from that church, but from other reformed churches as well. Congregations of the Reformed Church of America, the Christian Reformed Church, the Reformed Presbyterian Church Evangelical Synod, the Gereformeerde Kerken, the Gereformeerde Kerken (Article 31) and the Reformed Presbyterian Church in Australia were among those represented.

Intertwined with the other strands is the certainty that God orders all that happens, and He is faithful to His church. The all powerful hand of God is evident as Mr. Duff, the first missionary on the field, is refused reentry into Ethiopia, and begins to work in Eritrea instead. As a church is finally established after great disappointments, it is all of sovereign grace. God's covenant faithfulness is evident not only during the kidnapping of nurse Debbie Dortzbach, but also is revealed through Anna Strikwerda's martyrdom.

Although political turmoil has forced the closing of the mission, the church remains. The final chapter, "The Gates of Hell Shall not Prevail" rings with the affirmation that the Lord and King of the church will continue to further the cause of His bride.

A few typographical errors (mostly picture headings out of order) hopefully will be corrected in a future edition. Perhaps no better commendation of the book and its author can be found than the words of the Rev. John P. Galbraith, General Secretary of the Foreign Missions Committee, in the "Foreword":

"There are some who never give up. Clarence Duff is one of those. His Calvinistic persistence in trying to find a way, a means, and a place to preach the gospel is perhaps most aptly said in the

Scriptures: as much as in me is, I am determined to preach the gospel. This comes through in this story of our missionary enterprise in Ethiopia, but it is in spite of the author whose intention has obviously been to hide behind Christ."

THE CALL TO HOLINESS by Martin Parsons. William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1974, 95 pp., \$1.65. Reviewed by Hattie Guichelaar, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

The sub-title for this paperback is "Spirituality in a Secular Age." It was first published in England and later in the U.S.A. The author is a well-known British author, pastor and Bible teacher.

"The Call to Holiness" is a summons that comes to every Christian. Perhaps it is not sufficiently emphasized in our secular age. Holiness is defined not as an escape from the realities of this world but as conformity to the standards shown in the life of Jesus Christ. Prayer, Bible reading and fellowship with other Christians are given to us by God to assist us to be more sanctified. This book would be helpful to all those striving for more complete stewardship of all that they are and of all that they own.

IN TIME OF TROUBLE by E. M. Lauxstermann. Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1974, 72 p p., \$1.50. Reviewed by Hattie Guichelaar, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

This book, in outline form, has been prepared for the purpose of helping Christians face their troubles, present and future, which troubles may be without remedy and inescapable. It adequately fulfills this purpose. Scores of Scripture texts are used to substantiate the fact that Christians are never intended to be exempt from trials. This is an excellent, little book to read when troubled with God's Providence.

THOUGHTS ON PREACHING by J. W. Alexander. Published by The Banner Of Truth Trust, Edinburgh and P.O. Box 652, Carlisle, PA 17013, 318 pp. Price \$6.95. Reviewed by Joseph Brinks, Pastor, Noordeloos CRC, Holland, MI.

This book is a Banner of Truth reprint of an 1864 posthumously published collection of J. W. Alexander's homiletical opinions from his private journals.

The contents of the book are as follows: first, 166 homiletical paragraphs from the author's private journals; next, 10 letters to young ministers about various aspects of the preaching task; finally, 5 chapters which cover many matters relating to the preparation of sermons.

Some of the author's observations and thoughts are insightful. Many are commonplace. Some are incomplete. Others are just plain incorrect. This book is a collection of sayings from the author's journals. If one wishes to study a good homiletical book this book is inferior to others. But if one likes to peruse diaries and journals it has some value.

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ANNUAL MEETING

OF

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THURSDAY, OCTOBER 12, 1978

AT

Dutton Christian Reformed Church

DUTTON, Michigan (Hanna Lake Ave. and 68th St., S.E.)

2:00 P.M. BUSINESS MEETING and ADDRESS

by **JOHN H. PIERSMA** of Sioux Center, Iowa, on:

"OUR NEEDED REFORMED MANIFESTO"

(for all members and wives)

6:30 P.M. BANQUET (Punch Bowl at 6:00)

Tickets: \$6.00 each

8:00 P.M. INSPIRATIONAL MEETING (Dutton Christian Ref. Church)

Speaker: **REV. IAIN MURRAY** of Edinburgh, Scotland
Editor of the "Banner of Truth" magazine and publisher
of Calvinist-Puritan books

Topic: **"NECESSARY INGREDIENTS OF BIBLICAL REVIVAL"**

**EVERYONE
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