

# The Outlook

**REJECTING THE DOCTRINE OF HELL  
ATHANASIUS AND CHRIST'S DEITY  
CHRISTIANITY'S MORAL BACKBONE**



**JANUARY - 1979**

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

# THE CLOUD THAT LED THEM



REV. JOHN BLANKESPOOR

A New Year lies ahead!

What will it bring? What will we experience, if we may live, in the months and days of this year? Such questions arise in our minds and souls, accompanied often with feelings of anxiety and fear. What will happen in the world, in the church, in our own denomination, in our own families, and with ourselves? For all these questions and a hundred of others we have no answers. Absolutely none. The future is always unknown to us. But we do have this word:

“And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light: to go by day and night: He took not away the pillar of cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people.” Ex. 13:21,22.

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Life has often been compared with traveling. God's people are pilgrims traveling through this life. And travelers always need guides, such as road maps, road signs, and even compasses. Without them we would be completely lost in a strange country. So it was with Israel traveling from the land of Egypt through the wilderness to the promised land of Canaan.

But God always cared for His people. Before they had even begun to leave on this long journey God provided a wonderful guide, the cloud to lead them. Suddenly it appeared, we read, at Etham, and remained with them *all the way*. It led them, showed them the way, protected them against the Egyptians, as well as from the heat and the storms of nature. Usually it would just hover over the tabernacle, as well as fill the Holy of Holies. Sometimes, when God spoke to the leaders it would “come down” and appear at the door of the tabernacle. When the Lord wanted Israel to move it would be raised above the tabernacle and then move on ahead of the people. Israel simply would have been completely helpless without this cloud.

How simple it really was. The Old Testament is sometimes called the kindergarten age of the Church. God taught His people with such simple methods, with water coming out of the rock, manna falling

from the sky and here with the guidance of the cloud by day and night.

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On this cloud all our attention must be focused if we are going to understand the significance of this part of Scripture. And in it we will also find a rich meaning for us in 1979.

If we ask what the cloud symbolized, for what it stood, then the answer is given us in plain language in the Scriptures. In some passages the cloud is designated as the Lord Himself, then also it is called the Angel of the Lord. And the Angel of the Lord in the Old Testament is the Son of God in that particular form of revelation. Beyond any doubt, the cloud symbolized Christ in the Old Testament. Therefore we also see the glories of Christ our Savior, in the cloud. This cloud itself must have been a tremendous thing, very majestic and glorious. There surely was something sublime and grand about it. It must have been very large, at least at times, to bring about complete darkness in the camp of the Egyptians when they pursued the Israelites, and to protect the children of Israel from the heat and storms in nature. At night also it must have made a tremendous impression upon all the people, it was always like a large pillar of fire for the Israelites. Imagine! — for the entire forty years they never spent one night in darkness, at least not complete darkness.

We also read that when the cloud came down to the door of the tabernacle the people saw the glory of the Lord. Perhaps there was also, at such times, a special display of fire. Remember also, that clouds are always symbolical of something majestic and of grandeur. It is this cloud that led and protected the people of God, the apple of His eye. How wonderful Christ was for His church, His people, leading them as frail, helpless people through the uncharted and unknown desert. Surely they could say, if this cloud is for us, who can be against us?!

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We must always be careful that we don't become jealous of these Old Testament people. Paul calls the Old Testament church a minor, a child not yet of age. Adults (majors) must not become jealous of children (minors) even though we can learn from the simple faith of a child. Remember that these people in the Old Testament couldn't even read or write, and they didn't have as much as one page of the Bible. We in turn have the complete revelation and guidance of the glorified Christ. Even as the cloud led the Israelites, Christ leads His people today. It may not always seem to be so simple, but it is true, nevertheless.

Also in 1979 Christ will lead His people, and *always* show them the way. He will show *you* the way in which you must go and where He will lead you. Also, He will give protection and guidance. It is not always easy to determine what the will or way of the



Lord is for us. This can become very difficult. But I am also convinced that we can make it much more difficult than it really is. Remember, the Christ who led Israel by the cloud, leads us today by His Word. By the Word we must live, that Word we must consult, that Word we must learn to know, on that Word we must meditate, and according to that Word we must live. That Word tells us in general how we must live, where we may live, how we must teach our children, what we should believe and confess, how we should conduct ourselves in our daily lives, what kind of homes we should have, how we should use television, and so I could go on and on. . . .

It's in the Word, always. Therefore we must know this Word. We must read it as families, but also personally, and teach our children to do this. Every child should have his own Bible. Bible reading, Bible-knowing and Bible-memorizing Christians we should be. Constantly feed your soul with the contents of that Word, with the riches of Jesus Christ. And knowing it, live according to it, and let it be your guide in 1979. Doesn't Hosea tell us that God condemned the Israelites, that they would be lost because they had no knowledge of the Lord? And isn't it also true that today, with God's complete revelation given us in the 66 books of the Bible, and with perhaps at least a half a dozen Bibles in our homes the knowledge of the Word is so limited for many people of God? Sometimes it's pitiful.

Make resolutions for 1979? Then this is a good one, there can't be any better. Read and learn to know the Word more. Through it's use, with prayer, Christ will pour out blessings upon us. Blessings of guidance, His nearness, His comfort and protection in all of the needs of the New Year.

What will the New Year bring? No one knows. We need not know. What we need is to follow the cloud of 1979, Christ in the Word, the infallible speech of God to man in this world.

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How long was this cloud with the Israelites? How long did it lead them, and where did it lead them? We do know that it led the people of Israel in a "round-about" way to Canaan. It was like living in Michigan and going to Florida by way of Cincinnati, then to New York, from there to Toronto and then down south to Florida. Whatever reasons the Lord may have had for so guiding Israel, it surely would not have been the way chosen by them. A detailed map of the journeys of Israel reminds one of spaghetti. So Israel zigzagged "all over the place." God usually doesn't take the shortest way, nor the easiest way to heaven for us. Christ often leads us on many "detours," ways where we don't want to go. After all, who likes rough, long detours, having left a smooth highway? These detours can have sharp curves, and often be very rough. And this road is always narrow. There's never room for two, only for one. They are ways of self-denial, persecution, adversities, temptations and constant struggles with our own sinful flesh.

# 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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But following Christ in the Word they are also ways of untold riches of blessings of the Spirit, of love, peace, security and hope and joy.

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Where did the cloud finally settle? To what place did it lead Israel? The answer is simple, to the temple in Jerusalem. This was the place called the house of God, the house of rest and fellowship with God. So Christ leads us today, to the spiritual temple above, heaven itself. And in following the Christ in the Word, 1979 will be part of the way for His people on the way to the heavenly Canaan and the eternal temple above.

Remember, the cloud never departed from Israel. When we, by the grace of God, live by this Word we have the same assurances. Always will He go with us! What will 1979 bring? No one knows, but God. We need just one thing, follow the cloud of Christ in the Word. And we shall have a truly happy and blessed New Year. ●

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# a groundless decision

JEROME M. JULIEN

Wednesday, June 21, was a historic day for the Christian Reformed Church. That afternoon, before a full house of observers, a decision with many implications was made by the Synod of our denomination. It was decided by a majority, but *not* unanimously, "That consistories be allowed to ordain qualified women to the office of deacon, provided that their work is distinguished from elders."

This decision was the fruit of many years of labor on the part of those within the Christian Reformed Church who have wanted us to be progressive by opening the offices of the Church to women. Over the past years much discussion has taken place and great hopes have been built up that one day the staid, old-fashioned Christian Reformed Church would come to a new day. With this synodical decision a new day has come. There is little doubt that the next step will be the opening of the office of elder to women.

It would be well for every member of the Christian Reformed Church to consider the three grounds for this monumental decision of the Synod of 1978. At

best, they can only be considered very weak. Frankly, I see them as being so weak that to my mind this decision to open the office of deacon to women is in reality A GROUNDLESS DECISION.

The first ground reads:

- a. There is some evidence in the Bible for opening the office of deacon to women. At least two passages in the New Testament (Romans 16:1 and I Timothy 3:11) indicate that women may serve as deacons (deaconesses).

When we first hear this ground our hearts are set at ease because it tells us that the Bible approves of women being ordained as deacons. But the question we must ask is: *does it really approve?*

An earlier committee (the advisory committee of Synod, 1975) said, and Synod agreed, "that sufficient biblical grounds have not been advanced to warrant a departure from our present practice of excluding women from the ecclesiastical offices recognized in the Church Order" (*Acts 1975*, p. 78). Further, Synod indicated that up to that time no "compelling biblical grounds" had been given for the opening of church offices to women. Now, the latest report says that there *are* compelling biblical reasons. But, sad to say, in at least two ways this is a questionable statement.

First, the two texts referred to — Romans 16:1 and I Timothy 3:11 — are not really dealt with in the report that was submitted to Synod. In less than three lines Romans 16:1 is "explained" (*Acts 1978*, p. 511) and in some 35 lines the Timothy passage is discussed (pp. 511, 512). In neither case is thorough exegesis given. Nevertheless, these texts become "proofs" for women deacons.

Second, both of these texts are obscure and questionable in the minds of scholars. Conservative scholars like our own William Hendriksen and the late John Murray and Charles Hodge, both Presbyterians, do not see an official office of deacon in these texts. Rather, they see a position in the church which gives special help to the official deacons of the church. The Anglican H. P. Liddon, one-time professor of exegesis at Oxford University, saw it this way, too. James Denney of Scotland concurred by stating that to call Phoebe (Romans 16:1) a deaconess is using too technical a translation of the original word. Others, like the Lutheran Lenski and the Baptist A. T. Robertson, see these texts differently.

Even among the more liberal and Neo-Orthodox writers there is no uniform understanding of these texts. All you need to do is look at the references to these texts in the monumental *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* edited by Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich. One writer in this *Dictionary*, Hermann W. Beyer, wrote this about Romans 16:1, "It is, of course, an open question whether he (i.e., Paul, J. J.) is referring to a fixed office or simply to her (i.e., Phoebe, J.J.) services on behalf of the community. Similarly, there is no agreement whether I Tim. 3:11 refers to the wives of deacons or to deaconesses. It



is indisputable, however, that an order of deaconesses did quickly arise in the Church" (II:93). Other writers in the *Dictionary* are definite in stating that these women were deaconesses having similar duties to the men deacons.

Now, it can be argued that this group is indefinite since it states "that women *may* (italics mine, J. J.) serve as deacons." But since Synod of 1975 spoke of "compelling biblical grounds" as necessary for allowing women in office, no indefinite ground will do. Synod is obliged to give compelling biblical proof. These texts do not prove *without a doubt* what Synod wants to prove. Further, no exegetical work has been done in an effort to clear away the doubt. Doubtful passages do not form a good foundation for a teaching. This is a basic principle in Biblical interpretation.

The second ground states:

- b. The headship principle in which the woman (wife) is to be subject to the man (husband) is not violated as long as the office of deacon is expressed in terms of assistance and service.

It is true that the task of deacon is basically assistance and service. The word in the original Greek comes from a word that has the sense of "to wait at table" and is so used in Luke 17:8. Deacons were appointed to assist the elders according to the *Book of Acts* because there were necessary works of mercy which demanded so much of the elders' time that they were hindered from giving the spiritual oversight essential among God's people. The authority of the deacon is thus derived from the elder.

It follows, then, that if the office of deacon is only assistance and service, the headship principle is not violated.

It has been suggested that, in keeping with this view of the diaconate and since women now may function as deacons, we could radically restructure our consistories or councils so that we would follow the Presbyterian approach. Presbyterian churches normally view the elder as the ruler. He alone sits on what we would call the consistory or council. Deacons never serve in a ruling capacity. They always and only have separate meetings so that they can be singularly engaged in the ministry of mercy.

But, you see, it isn't all that simple. Paul, as he wrote to the church at Philippi, directed his letter "to all the saints in Christ Jesus that are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons" (1:1). Obviously, as he is writing to the congregation he is singling out some special people, indeed, special officers who are viewed as a unit, yet having two different tasks. Deacons are included with the ruling body of the congregation, the elders. Apparently, besides the work of mercy given to the deacons, there was a certain authority given, also. If an easy "out" for us would be to go in the direction of the Presbyterian system, then we would have to reconsider the commonly accepted understanding of Philippians 1:1. Else, how would we explain the combined authority implied here?

What is more: it isn't all that simple because our *Church Order* — the commonly agreed upon binding rule for practice in our churches — is not set up for the Presbyterian system. Our *Church Order* provides for the deacon to rule in certain ways. According to Article 35: "In every church there shall be a consistory composed of the office-bearers. The consistory is responsible for the general government of the church." Article 35 goes on to distinguish between a general and a restricted consistory. But it still stands that the task of the consistory is "the general government of the church." In his *Church Order Commentary* Martin Monsma explained this general government. To be sure, his explanation may be open to debate. Nevertheless, he included matters relating to office-bearers, ministers, discipline of office-bearers, worship, missions and evangelism. From this it is obvious that the consistory or council — elders *and* deacons — is involved in ruling.

If it is true that the office of deacon is wholly service, as we are told, and if, therefore, women deacons do not go contrary to the Biblical principle of the headship of man over women, deacons should *not then* function in the general consistory. They should be engaged in tasks which do not include any ruling. This, however, would call into question the Philippians 1 passage and go contrary to our *Church Order*. On the other hand, if deacons are to function on the general consistory in a ruling capacity of *any* form, women cannot function as deacons.

Women may function as helpers in the church, just as men do. Women always have. Many are named in both Testaments as being superlative workers in Christ's Church. At least three congregations that I have heard of in the Christian Reformed Church have had deaconesses. These women were not *rulers but workers* doing what men could not do in the Kingdom. The distinctive character of these women deacons was that without ordination they labored faithfully for the cause of Christ.

In one *Banner* article, Dr. Gerard Van Groningen linked the pressure for women deacons to the modern feminist movement. He indicated that the pressure in our denomination is, indeed, culturally and sociologically based. I believe that he is correct. For that reason those who have campaigned for women deacons and have now been victorious, will not be content with a service concept of the diaconate. For the women must be part of the ruling body of the church which is engaged in "the general government of the church." And for that reason the next step will be women elders.

The third ground given by Synod reads:

- c. There is historical precedent for this in the Reformed tradition (see Calvin's *Institutes*, Book IV, Chapter 3, Section 9, and the Synod of Wezel, 1568).

The first example of historical precedent given is that of Calvin's words. The words referred to in the *Institutes* are:

The care of the poor was entrusted to the deacons.

# GOD'S MEN AND DOCTRINES

ATHANASIUS AND THE DEITY OF CHRIST

PETER DE JONG

However, two kinds are mentioned in the letter to the Romans: "He that gives, let him do it with simplicity; . . . he that shows mercy, with cheerfulness" (Romans 12:8, cf. Vg.). Since it is certain that Paul is speaking of the public office of the church, there must have been two distinct grades. Unless my judgment deceives me, in the first clause he designates the deacons who distribute the alms. But the second refers to those who had devoted themselves to the care of the poor and sick. Of this sort were the widows whom Paul mentions to Timothy (I Tim. 5:9-10). Women could fill no other public office than to devote themselves to the care of the poor. If we accept this (as it must be accepted), there will be two kinds of deacons: one to serve the church in administering the affairs of the poor; the other, in caring for the poor themselves" (Battles translation).

Calvin says that there are *two* kinds of deacons: one, a ruling deacon; the other, a working deacon. The latter may be a woman. But what Calvin writes is now used to support the idea that women may serve as deacons on the consistory — deacons who thus rule. It does not appear that Calvin quite says what he is made out to say in the ground. In fact, I have a hard time keeping from questioning the honesty of this ground!

The other precedent mentioned is the Synod of Wezel, 1568. At that synodical meeting in the Netherlands it was judged that women could be appointed as deaconesses, that is, as female assistants who would help care for the sick. From the historical development of this decision it is apparent that these women were to be *appointed* as assistants, but not *ordained*. In 1580, the Classis of Wezel decided to ask the Synod of Middelburg, meeting the next year, if it would be "advisable to re-instate the office of deaconess." Apparently, over the dozen intervening years the practice had all but disappeared. Middelburg Synod answered in the negative. It was indicated that whatever could not be done with propriety by the men could be handled by their wives. There was no need to revive the office of deaconess. Most of the churches followed the decision. Notable among the exceptions was the church at Amsterdam. In Amsterdam, women continued to be appointed as deaconesses until the French Revolution — some two hundred years later. One thing should be clear, however: the Reformed churches *never* ordained women as deacons. Yet, the Synod of Wezel is used as a ground by our Synod for this practice!

To build a structure on a poor foundation is the height of foolishness. I believe that this decision of 1978 is built on a weak — at best — foundation. This decision should not be allowed to stand!

Instead, let us return to a faithfulness to God's Word. Only then will the Church of Jesus Christ — including this small part of it called the Christian Reformed Church — experience the Lord's blessing.

I've found one of the most exciting and profitable areas for Christian study to be the history of the Lord's Church — and more particularly the history of the proclamation, preservation, defense and definition of its gospel doctrines.

One of the most revealing points of view from which to approach the subject is given in the promise our Lord made about the coming and work of His Holy Spirit. He assured His followers, troubled by the announcement of His departure, "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may be with you for ever, even the Spirit of truth: whom the world cannot receive; for it beholdeth him not, neither knoweth him: for he abideth with you, and shall be in you" (John 14:16, 17). "He shall teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said unto you" (vs. 26). "He shall guide you into all the truth. . . . He shall take of mine and shall declare it unto you" (16:13, 14). We believe that the Lord has kept His promise, not as the Roman Catholics take it by guaranteeing an infallible church organization, but by preserving, defending and sometimes restoring through all the churches' troubled history a continuing declaration of the doctrines of His Word. In that process the Lord raised up and used men in a fascinating way — it's a movingly human story — but He did not use them in the sense, as the old and new heresies would have it, that men and their experiences produced the gospel, but in the sense that men were raised up, led and used by God to speak and live, struggle and triumph in confessing before the world the same doctrines God had revealed in the Bible, "the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3).

In the long centuries of church history it is doubtful if anyone was ever more remarkably raised up and used in this way than was Athanasius.

## A Forgotten Story

Even the name Athanasius is little known in the churches today. Unless one happened to run across the Athanasian Creed in the back of our hymn books he might never have heard of it in our churches. A student who had just returned home from his first months at college once asked me about that church history of Athanasius' time. His professor had told the class that the Nicene Council (which produced the Nicene Creed), consisting largely of unscrupulous church politicians and under pressure from an emperor who was still at least half pagan had been vastly over-rated in the traditions of the church. Was this



charge true? I had to concede that there was truth in those observations. But had they been told the story that emerges out of that dreary account of dirty politics, the story of the 46-year career of one church man who stood up and out, where necessary against the whole lot of unscrupulous self-seeking politicians and at the cost of 5 exiles totalling 20 years, often standing it seemed one man against the world, "Athanasius contra mundum," to insist that our Savior was and must be confessed to be no one less than God? Unfortunately, they had not been told that story. What a pity! It is a story of God's preserving His gospel through His man which the whole Christian church ought to know.

Recalling it might be extremely encouraging to many troubled Christians and preachers in our time. One of the most fascinating accounts of Athanasius' career is found in Edward Gibson's *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. As he detailed the life-story of the churchman Gibson, despite his own cynical skepticism, became positively carried away by admiration for Athanasius' character although he might not be able to appreciate fully the reason why the man could be neither frightened nor bought.

#### Beginnings of Conflict

In the year 318 Patriarch Alexander, leader of the Church in Egypt, made a speech to his clergy on the Trinity, stressing the Oneness of God. One of his elders, Arius, took exception to this speech arguing that it did not do justice to the distinctions between the divine Persons. He maintained that since the Father had begotten the Son there must have been a time when the Son did not exist, appealing to such texts as Colossians 1:15 and Proverbs 8:22 and held that the Son must be less than the Father. The bishop saw in these views of his elder an attack on Christ and the doctrine of salvation. The Christian faith, no longer persecuted since Constantine's conversion, was now threatened by compromise with the old paganism in these views of Arius.

When Arius began to propagate his views (like those of Jehovah's Witnesses of our time) and to seek the support of highly placed friends who were closely associated with the Emperor, the bishop called a synod in Alexandria to depose him from office.

The Emperor, Constantine, more concerned about the unity of his new empire than about what he considered an insignificant difference of opinion between clergy first admonished the two parties to stop their foolish arguments and disturbance of the church. When this did not resolve the matter he called a general synod to meet at Nicea in 325 to represent his whole realm. This synod too he admonished to seek peace and unity. At this synod there were three main parties, the Arians, a large compromising group holding middle ground and Bishop Alexander and the orthodox. The middle party proposed a rather broad, loosely worded statement which might accommodate all, but the orthodox, asking for mere clarity and definition, succeeded in amending it to state that the

Son was "of one (literally 'homo,' 'the same') substance with the Father." Although some preferred using only the Bible's language, this confession of Christ's unity was accepted and staunch supporters were excluded, deposed and banished.

#### Continuing Strife and First Exiles

Although the Nicene Council seemed to have settled the matter it did not do so for long. Within three years the deposed Arians had won the favor of the Emperor and been restored to their offices. The Patriarch Alexander had died and been replaced in office by his thirty-year old secretary, Athanasius, who had early interested himself in this important doctrinal dispute. The new bishop, Athanasius, was ordered by the Emperor to receive Arius back into office, and when he was compelled by conscience to refuse was threatened with banishment and accused by the enemy clergy of a variety of crimes including treason and murder. Although he readily met and answered these fabricated charges and even produced the man he was accused of murdering, his defenses did no good. His condemnation had been determined and it was carried out by a synod called by the Emperor because he had disturbed the peace of the church. Falsely charged also with threatening the grain shipments from Egypt to Constantinople, he was exiled to the West for two years.

On the death of Constantine in 337 his son, Constantius, became Emperor in the East and first restored the banished bishops. Athanasius, returning to Alexandria, soon had to flee in a second exile to Rome when the Eastern Emperor replaced the orthodox with men of the middle, compromising party. The Emperor Constantius, eventually wearying of the church strife halted the persecution of the orthodox and Athanasius was welcomed back to Alexandria in 346. After marrying an Arian wife, however, the Emperor changed his mind about church policy and ripping up the Nicene Creed he demanded that all now subscribe to the compromise formula that Jesus is "of like substance," not "of the same substance," with the Father. Most bishops, intimidated by the imperial order, subscribed. Soldiers were ordered to seize Athanasius and he fled to the desert, finding refuge among the hermits in a third exile, which lasted six years. It seemed that the Emperor had achieved his aim of unifying and bringing peace to the church by compelling general acceptance of a creed which denied the full Deity of Christ.

The experience of Athanasius in those six years would out-do the drama of most fiction. Although as Gibbon wrote, "whole armies were successively employed to pursue a bishop and a fugitive; the vigilance of the civil and military powers were excited by the Imperial edicts; liberal rewards were promised to the man who should produce Athanasius either alive or dead; and the most severe penalties were denounced against those who should dare to protect the public enemy," the fugitive bishop was faithfully served by the hermit monks who were his "guards, . . . secre-

taries, and . . . messengers," and he was never found by his Imperial enemy. The tales of his various hiding places and even of his secret presence at some important church councils would make a plot for a bestselling novel. Through this long exile his continuing writing united and encouraged the orthodox in their seemingly hopeless resistance to the politically promoted and apparently triumphant heresies, and the orthodox doctrine gained popular support. People sang in defiance of their preachers the doxologies to the Trinity and some formed separate assemblies led by elders.

#### More Passing Storms

When Constantius was succeeded on his death by Julian, who turned from Christianity to promote paganism, the new Emperor first decreed the return of all Christian exiles, and Athanasius returned to his office in Alexandria. Continuing to insist on the full Deity of Christ, he sought to win and conciliate those who had erred and to remove secondary misunderstandings so as to truly unify the church in the orthodox doctrine. Eight months after the return of the bishop, Julian, learning that many pagans were beginning to turn to the church under his ministry, decreed his arrest. Then the story is told that the old bishop, having to flee into his fourth exile, reassured his weeping friends, "Be of good cheer, it is but a cloud; it will soon pass!"

Pass, it did, in less than a year, when the emperor was killed by a stray arrow of one of his own soldiers, and Jovian his successor restored Athanasius to his office. Within another year, however, Valens, who succeeded Jovian, favored the Arians and Athanasius again fled just ahead of the arrival of those who came to arrest him. This fifth and last exile lasted only four months and after that he was restored, in 366, a man of seventy, to the last seven years of peaceful leadership in a church in which the orthodox doctrine of the Deity of Christ was triumphing over what had long appeared to be the victory of false doctrine and godless church politics.

#### Explanations

How is one to understand the incredible career of this old church father which even excited the admiration of a skeptical Gibbon? Why did he resolutely and at times seemingly alone refuse to compromise, even to the point of refusing to add one little letter "i" to the orthodox confession (changing the "homo-usios" or "same substance" to "homo-ousios" or "like substance") when every other important church leader in sight found it expedient or necessary to do so? Athanasius was firmly convinced that this was no quibbling about mere words or letters. At issue was the question whether the Christ we must confess was truly God who saves us or whether he was someone less who could not. This ground-truth of the gospel was not to be compromised, no matter what the cost of maintaining it might be.

How was he able to bear up against such pro-

longed and unrelenting pressures, and in the face of apparent defeat on all sides, to cheerfully persist in what must have seemed to most people an endless and hopeless struggle? The answer to that question is apparent in the scene of the bishop seated on his throne in the largest church in Alexandria as the doors burst open and the troops sent to seize him appeared in the entrance. He calmly ordered the deacon to read the 136th Psalm which celebrates the triumph of God over the enemies and His deliverance of His people, "O, give thanks unto the Lord: for He is good," while the people responded in the recurring refrain, "for his mercy endureth for ever." Only after the congregation had safely departed would he let his protectors carry him to safety. By raising this kind of church leader the Lord fulfilled the promise, "I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:18).

In our times the same problems increasingly trouble us: the pressures to compromise the truths of the faith and to dismiss their careful formulations as not worth arguing about, the temptation to adapt the gospel to changing times, the tactics of politicians ever ready to sacrifice the integrity of the gospel to expediency and to pleas for a united front, the effort to silence those who refuse to share such compromises, all these increasingly characterize our church life today. And how can one resist, not to say overcome, such pressures? It is still in the conviction of the truth of God's gospel and in the assurance of His sovereign power and sure triumph over all opposition that we are called to the same kind of steadfast confession, labor and struggle as Athanasius and the orthodox were in His day. Ours must be the same faith as Luther's and Athanasius'.

*And though this world, with devils filled,  
Should threaten to undo us,  
We will not fear, for God has willed,  
His truth to triumph through us.*

Dr. F. W. C. Schulte's chapter (pp. 15-40) in Vol. 2 of Kok's Dutch *Geschiedenis van de Kerk*, Edward Gibson's racy account in his *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Vol. 2, pp. 332-354, and the more detailed and doctrinally analytical lecture IV on "Athanasius: or the Unity of God" in G. L. Prestige's *Fathers and Heretics*, as well as a little book by L. H. Hough (1906), *Athanasius: the Hero*, all give excellent introductions to the colorful life and labors of this church father.

#### REMORSE

*'Tis evening — another day is past;  
What have I done, O Lord,  
That for eternity will last  
So many things  
I planned  
But did not do:  
O Gracious God, forgive,  
And when the morning breaks  
Give zeal anew.*

ANNETTA JANSEN



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## reformed women speak

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# PRIVATE INTERPRETATION AND CONTINUING REVELATION

SHIRLEY W. MADANY

*First of all you must understand this, that no prophecy of scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, because no prophecy ever came by the impulse of man, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.*

II Peter 1:20, 21 (RSV)

"Private interpretation and continuing revelation." I've been tossing these phrases around in my head for some time. Aren't the sects which flourish in America based on a private interpretation of the Scriptures? Shouldn't claims of new revelations be like warning signals to us? Departures from the historic Christian faith are often directly connected with a totally new interpretation. As all this eventually affect us personally we can hardly afford a carefree attitude of "Who's to say who's right?"

The Christian church was lead by the Holy Spirit, very early in its history, to recognize which books should make up the canon of Scripture and which ones should be left out. The matter of an open-ended Bible was settled at a very early date.

### Muslims

The revelation which the Muslims believe their prophet Mohammed received, some 600 years after Christ, remains a contradiction to us. From the various historical materials recorded in the Koran, their holy book, we see that the accounts of Old and New Testament events available to Mohammed at that period must have been confused and inaccurate. We are perturbed by the fact that the adherents of Islam now number around 700 million. We know that they consider their religion to be God's final revelation and thus superior to and superceding Christianity! We are beginning to realize why it is almost impossible for any Muslim country to tolerate within its boundaries any other religious group.

### Latter Day Saints

Equally puzzling, as to how it came to be, is the phenomenon of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, with its teaching of a continuing revela-

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*Shirley Madany, the wife of Rev. Bassam Madany, works with her husband for the Arabic broadcast of the Christian Reformed Church's Back-to-God Hour.*

tion. (The latest such revelation has opened up Africa as a potential mission field for the Mormons.) For these people the Book of Mormon is another word of God. Considering the life style of the Mormons it is hard to be critical of their strange beliefs. They appear to have a more consistent world and life view than we do. We admire their attitude towards family and Sabbath, their missionary zeal and their music.

However, the opening verses of the book of Hebrews tells us plainly that the days of the prophets have passed and God has spoken finally, once and for all, through His beloved Son, Jesus Christ our Savior. It is surprising that the Mormons use the book of Hebrews to prove to us that there *must* be further revelations. According to their reading of it, these revelations must be received by present-day prophets, called by God, just as Aaron was. They fault us for teaching that "the heavens were sealed, revelation was ended, there were no more prophets and all the word of God was in the Bible." (*Which Church is Right?*) In their opinion the true church disappeared for hundreds of years and did not reappear until 1830 when Joseph Smith received his special revelation!

Having a clear firm stand about what one believes is very important. Someone might come to the door tomorrow with an invitation to a Bahai celebration, a Jehovah Witness study group, or a "new" religion. The book of Hebrews is full of valuable material to help us face the sects. It reminds us that we have a great high priest, from a different line than Aaron, who lives forever in the house of God, and that we have no need of a Joseph Smith or any other prophet. The Word of God is complete, and sufficient as we have it.

### Dispensationalists

Even within evangelical Christianity, and not to be classed with sects, a novel school of interpretation began in the 1800's, known as "dispensationalism." A large segment of Christianity, which followed this way of Bible interpretation, ended up with an abbreviated Gospel. They still consider many portions of the New Testament as not applicable to this present time.

Enthusiastic new converts also often tend to read the Scripture in a very individualistic way. They have no awareness of the God of the Church and of history. They get impatient with us if we mention to them the dangers of heresies, which have never ceased, and if we explain to them how the creeds of Christendom came into being to answer such errors. They feel they have a direct line to God.

We really have to "test the spirits" of this age and pray for wisdom. The Holy Spirit will not lead us into some new thing which is not in the Word of God. We know that the true church never disappeared and that God always preserved His remnant. We must cling to the historic Christian faith as seen in the early Creeds and in the Confessions of the Reformation era. We must be on guard against any method of studying and interpreting Scripture which does not

reflect the genius of the historic Christian faith. Private interpretation often leads to heresy. Continuing revelation is a denial of the fulfillment of prophecy in Christ. ●

EDITOR'S NOTE: We may notice that the text quoted at the head of this article which informs us that "no prophecy of Scripture is of private interpretation" is immediately followed (II Peter 2:1) by a warning against "destructive heresies." The commentator Lenski observes that the word "heresy" comes from the Greek verb meaning "to choose," so that a "heresy" is really a "self-chosen" or "private" opinion contrary to God's Word.

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## CHRISTIANITY HAS A MORAL BACKBONE

KLAUS BOCKMUHL

Evangelicalism today faces three major issues. One, engaging smaller numbers of people and not yet as easily recognizable in North America, is the question of socialism and its appeal to the younger generation of evangelicals. The second, fully in the open, is the question of the authority of Scripture. Evangelicalism here seems to be placed between the millstones of liberalism and a mechanical concept practically alienating the believer from Scripture. It must reaffirm the truth of the Reformation — that Scripture contains everything needed for faith and living.

The third issue is vast, but more hidden. It is moral license, spreading secretly, a kind of evangelical lawlessness that produces a Christianity without a change of life. Let us not now look for amorality outside the camp: We need to face the fact that the landslide of immorality has reached the Church.

For one, it is surprising to see the extent of enthusiasm with which young evangelicals greeted and embraced the "New Morality" with all its ethical ambiguities. For them, who grew up in a milieu of legalism without purpose and perspective, but with the endless quarrels of "mini-morality" about whether it was permissible to smoke, drink, dance, use makeup, or go to the theater, the New Morality meant freedom, Christian freedom from the law. The relativism of values in our educational system may have added to that effect.

As befits our times, the trend of evangelical lawlessness can be specified particularly in terms of sexual ethics. A phenomenon of this is the deluge of evangelical marriage counseling books with their suggestive titles and sometimes quite explicit sexual passages. Authors and publishers have discovered the market possibilities of an anointed version of the

literary sex craze of our time. Yet preoccupation with sex and personal happiness, however, will never create the passion to take up the historic tasks of our time: to satisfy the spiritual and material hunger of mankind and to reconcile and heal its divisions.

The inevitable grim consequences of permissiveness are appearing. Leading young evangelicals coolly consider sterilization as a means of birth control. Divorce is accepted more and more and is obstinately defended as a Christian option. Common-law marriage is coming up. The breakdown of the family in the West does not stop short of the evangelical camp.

Strangely enough, the trend described seems to be further in the field of evangelism. Successful evangelists in their institutes teach their lesser colleagues how to be successful by avoiding to speak about sin. Worse, many people never seem to be taught just what conversion means. They register a decision for Christ, but there is no content to it. Conversion is a change of mood, of friends, of opinions, but not of daily life. It does not reach the level of behavior. It does not include moral change. When the recently converted publisher of a well known sex magazine announced that in the future his magazine would carry *sex and Christ*, he underlined the problem in question. And he is no exceptional case. *Christianity Today* carried a story of some born-again Christians in a major American gambling center who felt they could continue as card dealers in the casino because they knew no other trade, or because the Lord wanted them to witness. But then, on the same to pretexts, should prostitutes also continue in that occupation? Did Christ become a customer or a promoter of a brothel to witness to its employees? Make no mistake, this relates to us all, not just those from more exotic milieus. The question is: Do we believe that conversion includes a change in life with all its activities, or not?

We need to reaffirm that Christianity has a moral backbone. The Christian faith is inseparably joined with God's absolute moral standards and with a change of our relationship to society. In the New Testament truth is allied with justice and opposed to lawlessness. According to Christ the very truth of his message can only be discovered in its obedient application (John 7:17). Paul taught, "Let everyone who names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity" (II Tim. 2:19). There can be no Christian faith without distinct moral consequences.

Christians in the ancient world were known because of their different way of life (their positive attitude to children and to life in general being a noticeable difference). This remains a strong message to today's children of secularism, who are fed up with a life of license and aimlessness and feel strongly drawn to a different way. They can see the abyss materialism and sensualism must necessarily lead the world into.

Martin Luther had to fight the same battle in his own time. He wrote of some allegedly evangelical

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preachers: "They are truly beautiful proclaimers of Easter, but shameful preachers of Pentecost. For they preach nothing about the sanctification of the Holy Spirit, only about salvation in Christ. . . . However, Christ has earned for us not only God's mercy, but also the gift of the Holy Spirit, that we should have not only forgiveness, but also an end of sins. Whoever remains in his earlier evil ways must have another kind of Christ. Consequence demands that a Christian should have the Holy Spirit and lead a new life, or know that he has not received Christ at all."

There is the biblical example of Zacheus. Through his encounter with Christ his life was changed. The ruthless financier found a new goal. Thus his former gods could be pushed from their throne. His was an inward change that turned outward in actual deeds of restitution of justice.

Much of today's evangelical lawlessness seems to be the fruit of an evangelical aimlessness, the lack of a larger goal. We need to understand and accept the discipline that goes with discipleship and that is needed for Christian creativity. Our God-given task is to fight for a reversal of secularism and a new recognition of God's honor, authority, and commandment. That will also be the best service we can render to mankind. For God's absolute moral standards sustain the very structure of life. ●

This article is reprinted from the October 6, 1978 *Christianity Today*. It is copyrighted by that publication and used by permission.

### SOMEONE

*Someone forgot she was sitting there  
Rocking alone in her rocking chair;  
Friends and relations all far away —  
Someone forgot she was lonely that day.*

*Someone forgot he had lost his love;  
Only had hopes now for heaven above;  
Someone forgot he was there all alone —  
They were so busy with thoughts of their own.*

*Someone forgot she had lost her sight,  
That life around her no longer was bright;  
Someone forgot to lend her a hand;  
And they just hoped that she'd understand.*

*Someone forgot they'd been shut-in so long,  
Away from the worship service and song:  
Someone forgot to give them a call —  
They didn't mean to — they forgot, that's all.*

*Someone forgot to tell of God's love;  
Pointing a soul to heaven above;  
Someone forgot! O how could it be?  
And I believe that someone was me!*

ANNETTA JANSEN  
Dorr, Michigan

# Rejecting the *doctrine of hell*

JELLE TUININGA

Over the years we've been teaching our people that the Jehovah's Witnesses doctrine of the annihilation of the wicked after this life is unscriptural. For the Bible clearly speaks of the wicked as going into eternal punishment, "where the fire is not quenched, and the worm does not die."

Now some "Reformed" theologians are saying that we have to change all this, for apparently we were wrong and the J.W.s were right after all. According to an article "The Voice Lives On" in *The Banner* of April 21, '78, the late Dr. Thomas Delleman (d. 1977) said that over against the "traditional" understanding of hell, he is "inclined to support . . . the idea of *annihilation*, that is, the reduction to nothing, *nihil*. Those who withdraw themselves persistently from communion with the Lord and do so with their own will and knowledge will lose their life definitely; they perish and return to the dust of the earth. They are gone forever."

One learns nowadays to expect most anything, even in Reformed circles, and so he is not too quickly shocked any more at what theologians come up with. One builds up a kind of immunity to shock. At the same time one gets very sick and tired of this "wearisome relativism" that is invading Reformed circles. We're just not quite sure of anything any more. It all depends on how I see it, or on how you understand it. Delleman is right in observing: "Differences of opinion are the result of different views on Scripture and a different view in hermeneutics." And those differences can range as wide as the ocean. The result? — we have far more questions than answers! Perhaps there are no clear-cut answers anymore. We just don't know, because we don't know how to read and understand the Bible any more. At one time we thought we knew, but today we don't know.

Dr. Kooistra, author of the above-named article, is quite sympathetic to Delleman's views, and doesn't think we should call him a heretic right away. Kooistra is at least quite right in saying that the question regarding this (and other) issues is two-fold: (1) What does the Bible say? and (2) How do we communicate the gospel message in our age? Those two aspects of the question don't necessarily have much to do with each other. What I mean is this: In many cases it's not too hard to determine what the Bible actually says (e.g. in the point under consideration), but it's another matter whether we really want to communicate what the Bible says to our modern world. For that could prove to be a bit embarrassing, and modern man might not like what the Bible says. We want to

communicate something that is more palatable to him, and in order to do that with a measure of integrity, we have to change the message first. So we begin to adjust the Bible to suit what we want to communicate. That's the real problem. Rather than saying with Jesus, "Will you also go away?", we say, "Please don't be offended; if there's something in our message that you find hard to swallow, we'll change it. We are very accommodating." And we have forgotten or choose to ignore what Paul says in I Corinthians 1:18-25 and 2:6-14.

And then, of course, it's so easy to put up straw men in order to show the untenability of the "traditional" view, as Kooistra does — "the traditional idea about hell with its notions of a big fire and devils with goats' legs and long forks." That may have been the mythological idea of hell, but it certainly was never and is not now the Reformed concept of hell. To push straw men over is easy; to overthrow a view solidly based on Scripture is something entirely different. Neither Delleman nor Kooistra even attempts to do the latter.

For Delleman the *wish* has become the father of the thought. We wish there were no hell, and we wish we could tell unbelievers that things won't be so bad. And if we wish that long enough and hard enough, eventually we'll find a way to make the Bible support our wish. But it's damnable heresy just the same. And it's extremely sickening to see this kind of dope being peddled in Reformed circles.

P.S. For those who want a good Scriptural refutation of the "annihilation" doctrine, cf. *The Chaos of Cults* by Van Baalen, pp. 245-253; and *The Four Major Cults* by Hoekema, pp. 360-371. ●

#### BROKEN THINGS

*God uses broken things  
To sing His praise.  
A broken and a contrite heart,  
His love displays.*

*God uses shattered health  
To show His grace.  
A weak and helpless invalid  
His truth may trace.*

*God uses useless things,  
To humble men.  
The deaf, the mute, the failures, He  
Revives again.*

SIMON C. WALBURG

twelve / january, 1979

## LESSONS FROM I PETER



REV. HENRY VANDER KAM

Lessons 11 and 12 on I Peter appear in this issue. The writer is Rev. Henry Vander Kam, pastor of the Christian Reformed Church of Lake Worth, Florida. These articles are intended especially for church societies, other study groups, as well as any others interested in a careful study of another of the books of the Bible.

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#### LESSON 11

I Peter 3:13-22

### *Through suffering to glory*

Throughout this short epistle the author keeps one thing in mind: to encourage his readers as they experience suffering for the sake of Jesus Christ. They must realize that this suffering is the natural effect of their faith. They will not be forsaken in the midst of their suffering. Their faith, for which they suffered, will give them the strength to endure all things. That faith must be rooted in Jesus Christ. His teaching will sustain them and His example will make them bold. They will also experience that God's program for His Son was by way of the cross to the highest glory and that His program for His people often follows the same path.

**No need for fear** — They are to have a zeal for the good; they are to be zealous in keeping His commandments and so to do His will. This is required of all believers. Now then, who will harm you for this? Yet, that is precisely their problem! There are those who harm them, who cause them to suffer, even though they are zealous for the right. But, the Apostle teaches them, they cannot really harm you. You may suffer in the body, you may experience economic loss, you may be socially ostracized, yet, they cannot harm you in the most important part of your being. Sooner or later God's people experience the truth of Romans 8:28: "And we know that to them that love God all



things work together for good, even to them that are called according to his purpose.”

If you should suffer for doing what is right you need not be pitied but you are blessed! This is strong language and its truth is not immediately evident to those who have not made much progress on the way of sanctification. Paul considers it to be a great privilege to be allowed to suffer for his Lord (Phil. 1:29). You need, therefore, not be afraid of those who would cause you suffering. You must not be immobilized by the fear of them. You may not so be gripped by fear of suffering that you will not be able to function as believers.

**With eyes fixed on Christ** — Instead of the kind of a fear which would paralyze them they must keep their eyes fixed on Jesus Christ. They must look away from the troubles of their present state and look to Him. They must enthrone Christ as Lord in their hearts. When the Christ is enthroned in the heart they will be able to see everything else in the proper light.

They are to reverence Him as Lord! His Lordship will give them the proper perspective. It will also make it clear to them that He is in control over all things. No suffering will come without His will. At the same time, they will then do the things which He requires of them. If Christ is not recognized as Lord, sufferings will be grievous. If He is not acknowledged as the Lord of their lives, they will live without purpose or goal.

**Always ready to give a reason for one's hope** — Having the eye of faith directed toward Jesus Christ and recognizing His Lordship over your lives, you are always to be ready to give a reason for the hope which you have. Surely, that hope had not been taken away from them! Their hope is in Christ. He has come and wrought salvation and He is coming again. The reason for that hope is found in His Word. He has given His promises and they have the Spirit-wrought faith as evidence. They are always to be ready to bear testimony to this. This, of course, demands a high spiritual plane which can only be attained by a close relationship to Jesus Christ. Fear for suffering must be eliminated because they are to confess Christ before all men. They must be ready to give answer to any man who asks. Some of these might ask in order to know more about the faith they confess and live. Others might ask so that they might accuse the believers. They are to answer everyone! This is the believer's calling! If he would be so afraid because of the things which might happen to him that he would be silent, the cause of Jesus Christ would be greatly hindered.

It will take a certain boldness to confess Christ before all men, but this confession is to be made with meekness and fear. It must be done in such a way that the antagonist may be won and that the inquirer may be taught. The manner of the believer's witness to his Lord is important. Herein, too, they must follow the example of the Lord Himself and His Apostles.

The reason for the believer's hope must be made known in such a way that it will attract others. That hope is beautiful and must be presented as much.

**Having a clear conscience** — Your conscience must be clear when opponents of the gospel revile you. This has reference to their whole life, but also to the manner in which they give answer concerning the reason for their hope. There are those who bring persecution upon themselves. Their whole manner of life must be controlled by the Lordship of Christ. Then there will still be those who speak evil of them but that will be to their own shame. So must the Christian live in this world that he is beyond reproach. Then it will even be a shame to the unbeliever if he reviles that kind of life.

It seems to be a truism when the Apostle teaches that it is better to suffer for doing the good than for evil doing. However, this was not quite so clear to his readers. They stumbled at the will of God which caused them to suffer for doing the good. This was not only a suffering in the body but a suffering in mind and soul as well. How could He allow this? From all that has gone before it should now be clear to these people that it was far better to suffer for well-doing. God has His purpose in all this.

**With Christ as one's example** — Christ is their example in this. He also suffered for sins once for all. He was righteous, and therefore should not have had to suffer. He, as the righteous One, suffered for the unrighteous. Those who were unrighteous would never have been able to come to God, but by His suffering for them the way has been opened. He was put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit.

If there ever was an example for these pilgrims and strangers, it is Christ. By way of suffering He entered into glory. Their suffering is, of course, different from that of the Christ. He suffered for others and stood as the Substitute for men. However, if God did not spare His Son from this suffering, is it so strange that His followers go through the same kind of an experience? He is far more than an example — but — He is *also* their example!

**Through suffering to victory** — The following verses of this chapter are difficult and have received a variety of explanations. The Catholic and Lutheran theologians teach that these verses explain the descent into hell, of which the Apostle's Creed speaks. After Christ died He went into hell or the domain of the dead and preached His triumph over them. But, would the descent into hell then not be the first step in His exaltation rather than the final step in His humiliation? What would be Peter's purpose in teaching this right in the midst of his teaching concerning the purpose of the suffering of the people in the dispersion? We may not neglect the context in which these words are written.

Peter speaks of the fact that Christ preached to "the spirits in prison." Who were these people? Peter answers this question very clearly. They were the people who were disobedient during the days of

Noah. How did He preach to them? In the previous verse he writes that Christ was put to death in the flesh but was made alive in the spirit. In that spirit He preached to them. In the first chapter he spoke of the Spirit of Christ which spoke through the prophets of the Old Testament time. The victory of Jesus Christ, or the promise of the victory which God would achieve over the sin of man, was preached to the people of Noah's day. The preaching of Noah during the 120 years that the ark was in process of being built pointed to the Christ Who was to come. He was the preacher of righteousness and called the people of his day to repentance. Through repentance they would be saved. But, they were disobedient and only Noah and his family were saved in the ark. God had been patient with them for the space of 120 years and — then comes the deluge.

Noah and his family were saved through water, says Peter. That water was the grave for the disobedient. They spurned the word of warning which came to them and were destroyed. The destruction was total because of the enormity of the sins they had committed. By this water the earth was cleansed so that the family of Noah might begin anew and not be confronted by the wickedness of those who had perished in the flood. In this way the flood saved them. At the same time, the water which destroyed the wicked bore up the ark of Noah and his own.

The waters in the day of Noah remind the writer of baptism. That is the water which stands between the believer and the unbeliever. Baptism is not intended as a cleansing agent for the filth of the body, but to show the spiritual cleansing which we need. It strengthens the conscience in the knowledge of the forgiveness of sins. Through the resurrection of Jesus Christ we have received the assurance that sin has been slain and that we now have forgiveness.

The readers of this epistle have suffered much — but they should remember that suffering is not the end of the matter. Christ has suffered more than anyone ever has and the glory He has received is also greater than anyone ever experienced. The only way to that glory, however, was by the way of suffering. He not only rose from the dead — He has ascended into heaven and is at the right hand of God having all creatures and all things subject to Him. All creation must acknowledge that He is Victor. This is of great significance to the believers in suffering. Not only are they called upon to suffer for His sake, they will also rise again to newness of life and shall reign with Him eternally!

#### Questions for discussion:

1. Does the suffering of believers for the sake of Christ always strengthen them in the faith? Can it also do the opposite?
2. What is needed to be able to give an answer to everyone who asks concerning the reason for our hope? Can everyone do this?
3. What does the "descent into hell" mean? When did it take place?
4. What is really the meaning of baptism?

5. Why has the church made so little of Ascension Day? Is it of lesser importance than the celebration of the other events in our redemption?

#### LESSON 12

I Peter 4:1-6

### *Dead to sin — alive to God*

In the previous chapters the Apostle Peter has given a rather extensive treatment of the problem whereby his readers were faced. They needed this proper interpretation of the sufferings they had to endure. But, even though they may now be able to understand the reason for these sufferings better than before, more is needed. They must not only bear their sufferings according to the will of God, they must live lives which glorify Him. The believer must be able to do more than merely bow in submission before the things which he cannot change; his whole life must be a testimony to the grace of God which has been revealed to him.

**Arming oneself with the mind of Christ** — Not only has it been made abundantly clear to the readers in the foregoing that Christ has suffered in the flesh (they knew that) but that this suffering of their Savior has its significance too for the right view of the present life. They must arm themselves with the mind or thought of Christ, says the writer. They must have the same view of things which were exhibited by Christ. Christ came to defeat sin. Sin was His enemy. Sin separated the individual from the right relationship to his God. Sin must, therefore, be recognized for what it is. Sin was so grievous that it cost the Son of God untold agony and finally led to His death in the flesh. The believer must first know how great his sin and misery is so that he may seek the "way out." So must he arm himself with the mind of Christ. Then the present suffering will be seen in the proper perspective. Then you will cease from sin. Then you will hate sin! Then you will no longer be able "to live in sin."

If they are armed with that same mind they will attain to the purpose of their life. It will be a life which looks away from sin and longs for the living God. That mind was in Him.. Many things and many experiences will attempt to remove them from the thoughts which filled His mind and heart, but they must actively *arm* themselves to do that to which they are called. The writer does not say *how* they are to do this, but the rest of the Scriptures, as well as other parts of this epistle, will make that clear to them. They must "sanctify in your hearts Christ as Lord" and His Lordship will also show itself in their minds.

**According to the law of God** — If they have "ceased from sin" they may, of course, not live according to the principle of "the lusts of men" for the remainder of their lives. This is the principle according to which the unregenerate lives. They may not do this because they know what sin is and what it does. Nor may they console themselves with the forgiveness of past



sins and now continue in the way of the lusts of men. The rest of the time given them in this life must be regulated by the mind of Christ.

They must be guided by the will of God. That will has been clearly revealed in the law which He has given. They need, therefore, not wonder which kind of life is approved and which one stands condemned. The mind of Christ is also in perfect harmony with the laws God has given His people.

**Renouncing the sinful life of the past** — As was mentioned in the first lesson in this series, the readers of this epistle were from among the gentiles. They had not been born in the covenant. They did not have the privilege of the early training in godliness. Those are the days to which the Apostle refers when he speaks of “the time past.” That was the time when they lived the way the unbelievers around them live now. That “time past” was sufficient to show them what kind of a life it was. It was a long enough — too long — time for them. It was the time before all the sufferings of which they complain had come upon them. Would they exchange the present for the past? That past, of course, brought a far greater suffering on them than the present.

Peter characterizes the life of the gentiles as consisting of various sins. These terms show the depth of the degradation of the life of these gentiles. It consists of immorality, drunkenness, wantonness and idolatry. The last term is used because many of these sins were committed in connection with their worship of idols. This idolatry spilled over into various social functions where an idol was honored as the patron “saint” of that particular social group. In other words, it filled the whole life of the people. This was “the desire of the gentiles” — it was that in which they found their enjoyment. It was such an empty life — without purpose. It was a glorification of the flesh. Yet, that is the life in which unbelief finds its enjoyment and “satisfaction.” How impoverished such a life is! These readers must see that! They complain concerning the sufferings which have come upon them now that they are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. Look at that life from which you have been delivered! Look at that which the world calls enjoyment! You can no longer live that kind of life, says Peter, no, you have ceased from sin. See how great the work of Christ is which has already been accomplished in you! To see how far you have come you need only look to the past of your own life and to the lives of those among whom you now live.

**Living by a different standard** — These gentiles do not realize that there is anything wrong with or missing in their lives. Only the law of God gives us the knowledge of sin. Neither do these people look in envy on the believers and their mode of life. They think it to be strange that you do not join them in their manner of life. They are surprised that you cannot enjoy the things in which they find their enjoyment. They believe that the life of the believer is joyless. What enjoyment can there be in performing

religious duties and living a life which is bounded by laws other than our own? The real enjoyment of life, according to them, comes when all inhibitions are removed and one does whatever his flesh dictates.

But the believer has a different standard whereby he judges life and its enjoyments. He is not able to accompany the gentile in his merrymaking. The very fact that the believer does not go along with the ways of the gentiles is a condemnation of the way of life they pursue. Therefore they speak evil of you. This may not be restricted to speech — they will also abuse you. You become an irritant to them! You spoil their enjoyment. The believer has died to the ways of the gentiles and has been made alive unto God.

**Considering the condemnation of the wicked** — Not only is the life of the believer a condemnation of the manner of life of the unbeliever, but a far more important condemnation will come. They will have to give account to Him Who is the Judge of every man's life. God is pleased with the life of His people when it is in harmony with the profession which they make of faith in His Son Jesus Christ. He, however, judges the unbeliever too. He looks upon his manner of life. He is held accountable.

The God Who judges is righteous and just. He will not allow sin to go unpunished. He will judge both living and dead, i.e., He will punish both here and in eternity. What a blessing for these believers that they know that Christ has suffered and died for them so that there is now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus. They must keep the Christ always before them so that they will rejoice in the salvation He brought them and to be able to live a life with which He is pleased.

**Demanded by the preaching of the gospel** — Although the people addressed had come out of the gentile world and were still able to remember that period of time, the gospel had come to them several years ago. The writer is, therefore, able to speak of those who are now dead who had the gospel preached to them while they were still alive. Not only had the gospel been preached to them, but they had also believed the word preached. They had shared in the benefits promised by the gospel.

It was preached to them so that they might also come to an amendment of life. They would indeed reap the eternal profit, i.e., salvation itself, from this preaching — but they had also been instructed thereby in the kind of life which is pleasing to God. They had been judged in the flesh like men. Death had come to them too. The gospel does not prevent physical death. All men, believers and unbelievers, shall die and no one shall ever escape it. Even this physical death has been changed for the believer. The sting of death has been removed through Christ's victory over death, but death still comes!

Even though those who have gone before them have been judged in the flesh as men, they also learned to live unto God in the spirit. Here these people had examples of the Christian life which was expected of

them. It may well be that this former generation did not have to suffer so much for the sake of Christ as the ones to whom the Apostle was writing, but the principle of their lives showed that they belonged to the Lord Christ and that they had ceased from sin.

The gospel which was preached to both the readers and those who had already died gave the blessing of eternal life and demanded a life which was God-glorifying. *That* is the full gospel! The gospel indeed has many promises — it also comes with its demands. These demands are not contrary to the promises given. The promises must be proclaimed to all men and the law must likewise be proclaimed to all. This is the whole counsel of God. Let men hear of the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord and let them know His will concerning the lives of men. Then man will know the joy of salvation and the joy of a life lived unto His praise. The former life of these readers and the lives of those who are still unbelievers will fill the hearts of the people of God with a deep concern and instill in them the urgency to make the will of God known to them.

#### Questions for discussion:

1. How can we cease from sin? Is this ever complete? Do we make progress?
2. How can we think the thoughts of God after Him?
3. Does the world *enjoy* sin? Explain.
4. What must be our attitude toward those things which are the pleasures of this world?
5. Is there true enjoyment in a Christian life? Explain.

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# Philosophy and Scripture

PETER DE JONG

The title of this article is the title of a new book by John C. Vander Stelt with the sub-title, *A Study in Old Princeton and Westminster Theology*. It is his doctoral thesis for the Free University at Amsterdam in the Netherlands and is published by Mack Publishing Co., Marlton, New Jersey. Dr. Vander Stelt who was for a short time a Christian Reformed minister is since 1968 a Professor of Philosophy and Theology at Dordt College at Sioux Center, Iowa.

#### An Inviting Subject

The Presbyterian and the Reformed traditions with their common Calvinistic origin and holding the same

basic convictions but having diverse cultural backgrounds have much that should draw them together in the North-American melting-pot of cultures. Efforts to draw them together might be helpful to Christians of both traditions as they should seek to hold and live by the faith of the gospel instead of thoughtlessly following their own national and cultural traditions. To promote such a drawing together of Christians who in principle belong together, appreciatively critical studies of Presbyterian traditions from a reformed point of view and of Reformed traditions from a Presbyterian point of view would appear to be highly desirable. This book running to about 350 pages and revealing a great deal of research (there are 2,156 footnotes!) proposes to be such a study, as the author says, "to contribute in some small way to a better and more meaningful dialog within and between Reformed and Presbyterian communities in North America." He proposes "also to promote a more relaxed and trustful debate within the larger evangelical world on such crucial and complicated issues as the nature and role of Christian philosophy and theology, the historical cultural conditionedness of a believer's understanding of Scripture, the relationship between the written Word and human theorizing, and the source and nature of truth and certainty" (pp. 7, 8).

#### Philosophy Before Scripture

The author states in the opening sentence of his introduction that "Man's understanding of Scripture is always . . . influenced by the perspective of the . . . period and cultural context in which he lives." "There is no . . . realm that a man can live in, where he is supposedly able to receive rationally absolute, propositionally infallible, and scientifically accessible supra-human knowledge of faith." It is "the specific purpose of the dissertation to 'study' 'the manner in which several Old Princeton and a couple of Westminster Seminary theologians have understood and defended the Bible.'" Throughout this thesis the author tries to show by a study of Scottish Common Sense Philosophy first in Scotland, then in North America, then by a study of the Old Princeton College and Seminary theologians, from the middle 1700s' on, Witherspoon, Smith, Green and McCosh, Alexander, Miller, the Hodges, Warfield and Patton and finally Machen and Van Til of Westminster Theological Seminary, that these Presbyterians' views of the Bible were not derived, as they thought from the Bible but from their really no-Christian philosophy. To it he traces "the subtle error in its (Princeton-Westminster's) position on a certain form of inerrancy" (p. 2). Without considering this erroneous philosophy, he maintains, "it is impossible to comprehend fully the notion, for example, that the Bible is really a system of truths" (p. 3). In this introduction we are informed that the title, placed "Philosophy before Scripture" in order to stress the role of philosophy. "Throughout this essay, the stress of the analysis will be on the nature of the main philosophical tenets, on the essence of the truth-character of Scripture, and on the in-



fluence of the former upon the latter, rather than of the scriptural upon the philosophical" (p. 3). In other words, we are plainly told that the book's aim is *not to determine whether* in these Presbyterians' work their *Philosophy or Scripture* held the *dominating* influence, but to *prove that their Philosophy determined their view of Scripture*.

A footnote at this point informs us that the writer's original intention was to use "Common Sense Philosophy" in the title but that he "decided to use simply Philosophy in order to include the views of . . . Cornelius Van Til" who did not hold to this philosophy. We might ask why, if Van Til admittedly did not hold this philosophy, he is still included with the Princeton men. The answer is that "Van Til claims to have remained in fundamental agreement with the Old Princeton view of Scripture" (p. 7).

That the real target of the study is the Presbyterians' view of the Bible becomes obvious when Dr. Van Til who does not hold to the philosophy is still classed with and repudiated with them for holding the same view of Scripture, (p. 201, cf. p. 302) a view which the author, as becomes increasingly clear throughout the book, emphatically rejects.

#### **"New" Dutch Views Oppose Presbyterian Orthodoxy**

Vander Stelt's own point of view comes out especially clearly in this evaluation of Van Til. "Although he (Van Til) would tell his non-Christian friends that his 'view of reality and knowledge . . . is taken from Scripture,' and though he asserted that 'My "system" is attained by thinking . . . in the light of the Christ of Scripture,' it cannot be denied that he has remained closer to the scholastic spirit of Princeton thinkers . . . than to the more reforming thrust in the philosophical and theological thought of such men as Berkouwer and Dooyeweerd" (p. 264).

From this point of view he proceeds to criticize Van Til's holding to "a Bible that is a 'system of truth yielding information.'" And for "an intellectualistic form of biblicism" that really leaves no room for philosophy," for, "Basically, all one has to do is repeat what the Bible says about any subject" (p. 267). He accuses Van Til of "by . . . trying to defend (the infallibility of) Scripture" having "obscured the central content of it" (p. 267) and of failing to "appreciate G. C. Berkouwer's emphasis on the importance of the human dimension of Scripture" (p. 269).

In other words, it is plain especially from the last chapter (pp. 326-330) that the viewpoint expressed in this book is that of an uncritical following of Berkouwer (under whom this doctoral study was begun), and not the "old" Berkouwer but the "new" Berkouwer who, reversing his former hostility to the existentialist and Barthian modern philosophy and theology, today with his liberal followers has surrendered to them.

Considering this, increasingly liberal Dutch viewpoint of the author makes his consistently critical attitude towards the line of Princeton and Westminster Presbyterians completely understandable. A multitude of footnotes which are quotations from

liberal or Barthian secondary critics rather than direct quotations from the men whose views are discussed, and the way he deplors the Modernist-Fundamentalist controversies in which these conservative Presbyterians took part reflect this point of view. Speaking, for example of their "increasingly strict and intellectualistic understanding of both Scripture and the Westminster Standards," he says, "This extreme theological and ecclesiastical position of orthodox Presbyterianism which believed itself to be biblical but had unawares incorporated a number of unscriptural thought patterns, contributed its share to the vehement conflicts during the opening decades of the twentieth century between the supporters of the *Portland Deliverance* and the *Auburn Affirmation*. This struggle resulted in the educational split at Princeton Theological Seminary in 1929 and in the ecclesiastical schism of the Presbyterian Church in 1936" (p. 47). He would have us abandon such notions (involving their ideas of an "inerrant" Bible and credal "system of truth" to which men must subscribe) and in a more "relaxed and trustful" spirit, in "the joy of new insight" "move in the direction of ethical trust, confessional solidarity and religious shalom" (pp. 7, 8).\*

#### **A Significant Study**

Does the book succeed in showing that the long line of Princeton scholars were heavily influenced by Common Sense Philosophy and often attempted to prove the infallibility of the Bible, for example, by scientific and philosophical arguments? Yes, he does. And on that point his book with its many references makes a real contribution.

#### **Caricatures**

The major fault in the study is that one senses again and again that the views being discussed are really being caricatured rather than fairly presented. Is it fair to Archibald Alexander to charge him with a merely "intellectualistic" view of faith — "Scripture is a system of truths, and this system of truths is really a set of propositional doctrines. To be orthodox means to accept this complete body of reliable, biblical truths" (p. 112)? One could hardly guess from this characterization that Alexander was the warm-hearted writer who in his major work, *Thoughts on Religious Experience*, wrote of the regenerated man's "new perception of truth" "whether you ascribe it to the head or the heart, I care not. It is a blessed reality" (p. 64) and who has been called "the Shakespeare of the Christian heart."

A more glaring misrepresentation is Vander Stelt's attributing to Warfield's prejudice against subjectivism, and "not doing full justice to that which is . . . natural and subjective" in the Bible Warfield's accentuating "the passive meaning of . . . (II Tim. 3:16), God-breathed rather than 'God-breathing.' The passive epithet is needed to be able to describe divine attributes to the Scriptures: 'The Scriptures are spoken of as if they were God . . . God is spoken of as if he

were the Scriptures" (pp. 174, 175). Anyone who takes the trouble to read what Warfield actually wrote in his *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible* (pp. 245-348) must recognize that Warfield, far from trying to justify personal prejudices by distorting his material, was showing by the most careful exegetical study, what the Bible unquestionably claimed about itself. He exposed the flimsy distortions of liberal critics who want to escape from that plain teaching of Scripture. What Vander Stelt attributes to Warfield's philosophical prejudices are actually, as Warfield goes to endless efforts to show, nothing but the inescapable teachings of the Bible. Vander Stelt's irresponsible treatment of this matter shows him opposing those Bible teachings in the same way that Warfield's liberal opponents of a hundred years ago did.

A similar distortion greets us in the portrayal of Machen as regarding the Bible as "an infallible collection of proof texts direct from God" (p. 217) and a "theologically accessible system of factual and propositional truths" (p. 218). To correct this kind of misrepresentation one only needs to read what Machen wrote. Machen found much of the church arguing that "faith . . . is not assent to a creed, but it is confidence in a person." He cited Hebrews 11:6, "He that cometh to God must believe that He is," and observed, "The words, 'God is,' or 'God exists constitute a creed: they constitute a proposition; and yet they are here placed as necessary to that supposedly non-intellectual thing that is called faith." "It is perfectly true, of course, that faith in a person is more than acceptance of a creed, but . . . it always involves acceptance of a creed. Confidence in a person is more than intellectual assent to . . . propositions about the person, but it . . . becomes impossible the moment they are denied." "One cannot trust a God whom one holds with the mind to be either non-existent or untrustworthy" (*What Is Faith?* pp. 47, 48).

#### A Philosophy Against the Bible

Why does this book insist on giving such a distorted portrayal of this whole Presbyterian tradition? It is evident at many points that the author, in company with the many others here and in the Netherlands to whom he appeals for support, shares the critical, liberal views of the Bible and the creeds which that long line of orthodox Presbyterian scholars were opposing. He, at many points, sees and shows how those Presbyterians were unduly influenced by a philosophy which today has fallen out of favor, but he seems to be completely oblivious to the fact that his own criticisms embody and show even more clearly his uncritical assumption of the modern existential and Barthian philosophy and theology to which Berkouwer and his followers have in principle surrendered. He charges that the Presbyterians assumed that "truth is basically static" and therefore were unable to acknowledge "the historical dimension or the dynamic aspect of truth." They therefore believed it to be "propositional, not historical . . . permanent, not dynamic? It becomes evident that the writer accuses the Presby-

terians of exclusively holding to one of these because he by his philosophy is committed to over- or exclusively emphasizing the other.

#### An "AACs" View of the Bible

The hostility to anything "propositional," "static," "creedally binding," "objective" shown throughout this book has a familiar ring. It is the same emphasis we have often encountered in the earlier writings of other men of the Association for the Advancement of Christian Scholarship (AACs). The consistent minimizing of the role of the Bible and the constantly critical references to any notion of its infallibility or inerrancy reveal the same distorted notions about the Word of God which I have often observed in other AACs writers. Vander Stelt tells us plainly that "Scripture is not to be equated with this Word" but is only "the trustworthy lingual witness . . . of that divine personal Word through whom everything was made" (p. 316). It might seem that this is to say Christ is the real "Word." But his whole construction is more philosophical than that. "Both the incarnate Word and the written Word are uniquely *redemptive* manifestations within created reality, of the creation word of God" (320). Harry Downs some time ago in his *Power-Word and Text-Word in Recent Reformed Thought* showed rather effectively how this separating "Power-Word" from "Text-Word" minimizes the authority of the Bible. We have been told that the AACs has changed over the years, but this book shows the same characteristic attitude toward the Bible that is found in earlier writings of its adherents. We see that coming out in this book especially in the hostile criticism of the Presbyterians who have maintained the Bible's inerrancy and opposed the attacks upon it, and in the uncritical endorsement of Berkouwer who today justifies these attacks.

#### Need for Militancy and Discipline

The author of this book is harsh in his criticism of the "unnecessarily offensive" form of Van Til's apologetics. "Covenant-breakers . . . because they suppress truth in unrighteousness, need to have truth communicated to them through deliberate confrontation." "There is 'no appeasement' but always the need for 'head on collision' and engagement in 'offensive warfare'" (p. 230, note 239). And this too is attributed to Van Til's philosophy. The writer does not like such "black and white" distinctions. But what he and many other of today's theologians and would-be Christian philosophers fail to consider is that in dealing with these matters we are not playing harmless little games with philosophical theories for relation and entertainment, but, as Van Til reminds us, dealing with the Word of God on which men's eternal salvation depends. In these matters the difference between the true and the false is not the product of a mistaken commonsense philosophy but the plain teaching of God's Word which sharply distinguishes the truth from the lie. "No lie is of the truth" (I John 2:21). Also the notion of a "system of truth" is not, as is repeatedly alleged, a product of rationalistic philos-



ophy, but the teaching of the Bible which orders us to "Hold the pattern of sound (lit. "healthful") words . . . in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus" (II Tim. 1:13).

It commands us to 'guard' this trust, and to oppose and discipline those who reject it. It summons us to "fight the good fight of faith" (I Tim. 6:12) and to oppose the devil's destructive lies with the Lord's gospel of salvation. Berkouwer and other theologians whom the author suggests we follow, now seem to ignore all this. Instead of fighting against and disciplining error as they formerly did, they now invite us to join it in singing the doxology. But God's prophets warn us that He doesn't want disobedient doxologies (Isaiah 1:10ff.).

The checkered history of the Christian church often shows how necessary was the warning of the Bible, "Take heed lest there shall be any one that maketh spoil of you through his philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after rudiments of the world, and not after Christ" (Col. 2:8). This book shows how the old Presbyterian leaders needed that warning and did not always succeed in living by it. It also reveals how urgently the author and those whose views he follows need it, although they, moving with the spirit of our age, usually seem oblivious to that.

The editor of *Christianity Today* observed some years ago that a thinker may have seriously erroneous views, but if he holds a high view of God's Word that Word will eventually correct him; if he does not have such a high regard for God's Word, there is nothing to correct him. Study of the old Presbyterians shows that, holding such a high regard for the Bible, they had their errors limited and corrected; the author and those views he follows, discarding that kind of regard for the Bible, have nothing to correct them. The usual appeal to the Holy Spirit at the end of the study (pp. 330ff.) will not help them if they refuse to be guided by His inspired Word. Lacking or unwilling to accept that Word as a test of truth, one has no way to distinguish the Holy Spirit from His great imitator, the devil (I John 4:1-6; II Cor. 11:13-15). Compromise with the devil will never lead to "ethical trust, confessional solidarity and religious shalom," although he may tempt us as he did our first parents with the promise of "the joy of new insight."

Every office holder in the Christian Reformed Churches was asked when he took office, "Do you believe the Old and New Testament to be the only Word of God?" and has answered, "I do." May a church which confesses that conviction tolerate and may its members support teaching that insists, "Scripture itself is not to be equated with this Word" (p. 316)?

\*Philip Holtrop promoted the same point of view in the February, 1977 *Reformed Journal* in an article entitled, "A Strange Language: Toward a Biblical Conception of Truth and a New Mood for Doing Reformed Theology." I responded to that in the May 1977 *OUTLOOK* under the title, "A New Sales Pitch for Modern Theology."

## 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.

### THE CHRISTIAN AND AMUSEMENTS

**Is there really that much wrong in playing cards?**

A letter received by our editor from a Wisconsin reader some months back was referred to me for response in the Question Box. The writer refers to the subject of the Christian and amusements, particularly as that relates to card-playing. The author states that it is a common practice for Senior Citizens to play cards together; when asked to participate with them, and consenting to do so on one occasion, the result was a considerable feeling of guilt. "Is there really that much wrong in playing cards?" is the individual's question.

The matter of amusements and the Christian's participation in them has been debated for quite some time in the history of the church. The familiar decisions of 1928, sometimes referred to as "a declaration of war upon worldliness," stemmed from an overture to Synod in 1926 asking Synod "to utter a strong warning against worldliness and take a definite stand against the popular evils of card-playing, theater attendance and dancing." Such a declaration of war was highly commendable, for we are all agreed, I trust, that worldliness strikes at the heart and core of the moral and spiritual well-being of the Christian. The disagreement over this issue has not resulted from a careless attitude about worldliness, but about what is amusement, and which amusements are "worldly."

There were four general principles adopted by the Synod of 1928 regarding the Christian and amusements: 1) The Honor of God; that is, our whole purpose in life is to honor God, and our amusements, at the very least, should not conflict with any com-

mandment of God. 2) The Welfare of Man; that is, even though there is a place for recreative activity in our lives, none of this should hinder our spiritual or moral well-being, and it should never occupy more than a secondary place in life. 3) Spiritual separation from the world; that is, we are to hold no fast friendship with evil men, and we must wean our hearts away from the things of this world which pass away. 4) Christian Liberty; that is, ours is not license to do as we please, but freedom from the power of sin and the law which curse us; we are at liberty, with a conscience controlled by the Spirit of God, to determine our participation in things neither prescribed nor condemned in the Word of God.

Although the Synod of 1951 was again asked to clarify the decisions of 1928, these general principles which had been adopted then were not negated or reversed. The Synod of 1966, through its study committee, did a further re-evaluation of these principles, and adopted a number of directives intended to guide the churches, most specifically with regard to the film arts. Here again, no mention was made of negating the four general principles adopted by the Synod of 1928.

So it seems to me that the question regarding card-playing which prompts our consideration at the moment, must be answered in the light of the four principles mentioned above, as well as against the background of the directives adopted by the Synod of 1966. There is room for various interpretations when it comes to applying these principles to specific things. Apparently the church has not wanted to declare pointedly that card-playing is, in itself, always sinful. If card-playing involves gambling, then it is wrong. But then so is any other game we play if gambling is associated with it. If the Senior Citizens, or any of us for that matter, can justify the time spent together in some re-creative activity or amusement, then whether they are playing a game that involves cards or dominoes or shuffle-board, as I see it, makes little difference. The person, for example, who says he will not play a game of cards, but spends so much time on the golf course that he neglects his other responsibilities, is also in conflict with the principles mentioned earlier.

Some who approve games of skill have scruples against games of chance. The Bible teaches us that no one should act against his conscience (Rom. 14).

May I recommend in conclusion, that if you have access to a copy of the Acts of Synod of 1966, you read the report in its entirety on pages 316-361, or at least the recommendations which that Synod adopted on pages 33-36. Or for 20¢, you may order a separate publication of this report entitled "The Church and the Film Arts," published by the Christian Reformed Publishing House, 2850 Kalamazoo Ave., S.E., Grand Rapids, Mich. 49560.

**Correction:** In the Dec. 1978 Question Box on p. 20, the sentence in the middle of the first complete paragraph should read: "We are **not** told to rest," instead "we are told to rest."

## OUR TESTIMONY

The following ministers have now endorsed the "Testimony" formulated by Peter Y. De Jong, Nelson D. Kloosterman, John H. Piersma, John R. Sittema, Henry B. Vanden Heuvel.

We, the undersigned, express our wholehearted agreement with this TESTIMONY and pledge to implement it to the best of our ability:

- Arthur Besteman — pastor, North Street CRC, Zeeland, Mich.
- Harold Bossenbroek, pastor emeritus, CRC Leighton, Iowa
- Timothy J. Brown, pastor, CRC Lucas, Michigan
- Leroy G. Christoffel — pastor, Bethel CRC, Oskaloosa, Iowa
- Harold De Groot — pastor CRC, Sioux Falls, South Dakota
- Renze De Groot, pastor emeritus, CRC, Godwin Heights, Grand Rapids, Michigan
- Alexander C. De Jong — pastor, Kedvale Ave., CRC, Oak Lawn, Illinois
- Frank De Jong — home missionary, San Jose, California
- Peter De Jong — pastor, CRC, Dutton, Michigan
- Nicholas De Vries, associate pastor, Immanuel CRC, Ripon Calif.
- Donald Draayer — pastor, CRC, Newton, Iowa
- Frank Einfeld — pastor, CRC, Grangeville, Idaho
- Morris H. Faber — Bible teacher and pastor emeritus, Grand Rapids, Michigan
- C. Eric Fennema — pastor, CRC, Sibley, Iowa
- Leonard Greenway — associate pastor, Highland Hills CRC, Grand Rapids, Michigan
- Fred Gunnink — pastor, CRC, Coopersville, Michigan
- Bernard J. Haan — president, Dordt College, Sioux Center, Ia.
- Norman B. Haan — pastor, First CRC, Waupun, Wisconsin
- Orlin J. Hogan — pastor, Bozeman, Montana, CRC
- Peter Huisman — pastor, East Palmyra, New York, CRC
- John B. Hulst — dean of students, Dordt College, Sioux Center, Iowa
- John R. Jackson — pastor, Bethel CRC, Waupun, Wisconsin
- Jerome M. Julien — pastor, First CRC, Pella, Iowa
- Rein Leestma — pastor, CRC, Lynwood, Illinois
- Karel E. F. J. Malefyt, minister emeritus, First CRC, Artesia, California
- Gregg V. Martin, pastor, Bethel CRC, Dunnville, Ontario
- Calvin W. Nieuwenhuis — pastor, CRC, Platte, South Dakota
- Louis Praamsma — professor and pastor emeritus, Hamilton, Ontario
- John C. Ridders, pastor, CRC Norfolk, Virginia
- William H. Rutgers — professor and pastor emeritus, Grand Rapids, Michigan
- Ring Star, pastor emeritus, Cottonwood Heights CRC, Jenson, Michigan
- Leonard Stockmeier — pastor, CRC, Corsica, South Dakota
- Garret H. Stoutmeyer, emeritus, Shawnee Park CRC, Grand Rapids, Michigan
- Christian G. Ter Maat, emeritus, First CRC, Sioux Center, Iowa
- Martin Toonstra, pastor, CRC Eastmanville, Michigan
- Cecil W. Tuininga — pastor, CRC, Grande Prairie, Alberta
- Jelle Tuininga — pastor, First CRC, Lethbridge, Alberta
- Jacob W. Uitvlugt — pastor, Beverly CRC, Wyoming, Michigan
- Gerald W. Vanden Berg — pastor, CRC, Prinsburg, Minnesota
- Harlan G. Vanden Einde — pastor, Oakdale Park CRC, Grand Rapids, Michigan
- Thomas C. Vanden Heuvel — pastor, First CRC, Chino, Calif.
- Calvin Vander Meyden, pastor, CRC Jamestown, Michigan
- Gerrit Vander Plaats — pastor, First CRC, Oskaloosa, Iowa
- John Vander Ploeg — pastor emeritus, Grand Rapids, Michigan
- Peter Vander Weide, pastor, First CRC, Jenison, Michigan
- Robert E. Van Hofwegen — pastor, CRC, Hawarden, Iowa
- Fred Van Houten — pastor, Orangewood CRC, Phoenix, Ariz.
- Lambertus Van Laar, pastor emeritus, Grand Rapids, Michigan
- Richard Veldman — pastor emeritus, Grand Rapids, Michigan
- Richard J. Venema — pastor, First CRC, South Holland, Illinois
- Arthur J. Verburg — pastor, Oak Glen CRC, Lansing, Illinois
- Simon Viss — pastor emeritus, Ripon, California
- Nicholas Vogelzang — pastor, CRC, Bellevue, Washington
- Syburn M. Voortman — pastor, CRC, Dorr, Michigan
- Clarence G. Werkema — pastor, Bethany CRC, South Holland, Illinois
- David G. Zandstra, pastor, Bethel CRC, Plano, Texas



# A LOOK AT BOOKS

*Books, books  
With golden locks —  
Hives of rarest honey;  
Story — song,  
A friendly throng —  
The world for little money.*  
AUTHOR UNKNOWN

## BOOKS RECEIVED

(Books received from the publishers for mention and/or review — John Vander Ploeg)

**DEATH BEFORE BIRTH** by Harold O. J. Brown; 168 pages; Thomas Nelson, Inc., Publishers; \$5.95; "a book which looks at all sides of the abortion problem. . ."

**THE SHAKING OF ADVENTISM** by Geoffrey J. Paxton; 172 pages; Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Mich.; \$3.95; "a documented account of the crisis among Adventists over the doctrine of justification by faith."

**A WOMAN'S WORKSHOP ON PROVERBS — Student's Manual**, \$1.50; 111 pages; **Leader's Manual**, \$1.95; 137 pages; by Diane Bloem; Zonlervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Mich. 49506.

**NURTURING CHILDREN IN THE LORD** (a study guide for teachers on developing a biblical approach to discipline) by Jack Fennema; 162 pages; Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., Phillipsburg, N.J.; \$4.95.

**COMMENTARY ON REVELATION** by Henry Barclay Swete; 338 pages; amillennial approach; "written very aptly for the Greek scholar of today to sharpen skills in exegesis"; Kregel Publications, Grand Rapids, Mich. 49501; \$12.95.

**COMMENTARY ON MARK** by Henry Barclay Swete; 433 pages; ". . . Swete's focus on each verse using the Greek and Latin leaves little unseen; for he reveals his research"; Kregel Publications; \$12.95.

**THE PIETY OF JOHN CALVIN** (An Anthology Illustrative of the Spirituality of the Reformer). Translated and edited by Ford Lewis Battles. Music edited by

Stanley Tagg; Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Michigan; 180 pages; \$9.95.

**THE HOMOSEXUAL CRISIS IN THE MAINLINE CHURCH** by Jerry R. Kirk; 191 pages; Thomas Nelson, Inc., Publishers, New York; \$3.95.

**EXPLORE THE WORD** by Henry M. Morris, III; 340 pages; Creation-Life Publishers, San Diego, California; \$5.95.

**FANNY CROSBY SPEAKS AGAIN** by Fanny Crosby. Edited by Dr. Donald P. Hustad; 120 hymns by Fanny Crosby never before published; Hope Publishing Co., Carol Stream, Ill. 60187; \$2.50.

**THE ATONEMENT OF CHRIST** by Francis Turretin. Translated by James R. Wilson; 195 pages; Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Mich.; \$4.95.

**CLOSE ENCOUNTERS: A BETTER EXPLANATION** by Clifford Wilson and John Weldon. Publisher's claim: "The most up-to-date book on UFO's!" Master Books, A Division of CLP, P.O. Box 15666, San Diego, California 92115.

**EVOLUTION — THE FOSSILS SAY NO!** by Duane T. Gish. 186 pages; Creation-Life Publishers, P.O. Box 15666, San Diego, California 92115; \$2.95.

**CONTEMPORARY WORLD THEOLOGY** (a layman's guidebook) by Harvie M. Conn; 155 pages; Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., Box 186, Nutley, N.J. 07110; \$2.95.

**WOMEN'S ORDINATION — RIGHT OR WRONG?** A series of lectures from the Institute on Women in the Church delivered at Western Theological Seminary, Holland, Mich Order at \$1.00 each from Post Office Box 322, Lansing, Illinois 60438.

**STUDIES IN PROVERBS** (Laws from Heaven for Life on Earth) by William Arnot; 583 pages; hardcover; Kregel Publications, Grand Rapids, Mich. 49501; \$10.95.

**JESUS AS THEY SAW HIM** (New Testament Interpretation of Jesus) by William Barclay; 429 pages; paperback; Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Mich.; \$4.95.

**APOSTLES TO THE CITY** (Biblical Strategies for Urban Missions) by Roger S. Greenway; 96 pages; paperback; Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Mich.; \$3.95.

**ISAIAH: SCROLL OF A PROPHETIC HERITAGE** by William L. Holladay; 270 pages; paperback; Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Mich. \$6.95.

**THE TRINITY OF THE UNIVERSE** by Nathan R. Wood; 220 pages; hardcover; Kregel Publications, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49501; \$5.95.

**AN ALARM TO UNCONVERTED SINNERS** by Joseph Alleine; 190 pages; Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Mich.; \$2.45.

**THE LIFE OF REVEREND DAVID BRAINERD**; Chiefly extracted from his diary by Jonathan Edwards; 360 pages; Baker Book House; \$3.45.

**COUPLES IN THE BIBLE** (a Discussion Guide) by Daniel R. Seagren; 162 pages; Baker Book House; \$1.25.

**THE TRUTH OF GOD INCARNATE** (five prominent theologians join forces to defend the doctrine of Christ's divinity against recent attacks. Edited by Michael Green; 144 pages; Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Mich. \$2.45.

**THE THOUGHT OF THE EVANGELICAL LEADERS** — Notes of the Discussions of The Electric Society London during 1798-1814. Newton — Cecil — Scott — Simeon, etc. Edited by John H. Pratt. 535 pages. The Banner of Truth, P. O. Box 621, Carlisle, Pa. 17013; \$10.95.

**THE MOON — ITS CREATION, FORM AND SIGNIFICANCE** by John C. Whitcomb and Donald B. De Young; 180 pages; BMH Books, P.O. Box 544, Winona Lake, Indiana 46590

**HISTORICAL DIRECTORY OF THE REFORMED CHURCH IN AMERICA — 1628-1978** by Peter N. Vanden Berge; 385 pages; Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 255 Jefferson Ave., S.E., Grand Rapids, Mich. 49502.

**EERDMAN'S FAMILY ENCYCLOPEDIA OF THE BIBLE**. Organizing Editor — Pat Alexander; 328 pages; Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., \$15.95.

**CALVIN'S DOCTRINE OF PREDESTINATION** (second edition) by Fred H. Klooster; 98 pages; Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Mich. \$3.95.

**TELEGARBAGE** (What You Can Do About Sex and Violence on TV) by Gregg Lewis; Thomas Nelson, Inc., Publishers, Nashville, Tennessee; 164 pages; \$2.95.

**KARL BARTH — PREACHING THROUGH THE CHRISTIAN YEAR**. Selected by John Mc Tavish and Harold Wells. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. 279 pages; \$6.95.

**CALVIN ON SCRIPTURE AND DIVINE SOVEREIGNTY** by John Murray; Baker Biblical Monograph; 71 pages; Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Mich.; \$2.95.

**LOVE WITHIN LIMITS** (A Realist's View of I Corinthians 13) by Lewis B. Smedes; 135 pages; Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Mich. \$3.95.

**TRUTHS THAT COUNSEL AND COMFORT** (Help and Hope for the Troubled) by Evelyn Lauxtermann. 264 pages. (A Manual for Christian Telephone Crisis Counselors), Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co. \$7.95.

**CHRISTIANITY AND DEMOCRACY** by Norman De Jong; 170 pages; The Craig Press; \$4.95.

**I AND II THESSALONIANS**, by Geoffrey B. Wilson (Banner of Truth Trust, 1975), 124 pages. Reviewed by John R. Sittema, Sanborn, Iowa.

The back cover hails this little, inexpensive, commentary on Paul's letters to Thessalonica as one written by a minister with "a reputation for sound exposition without frills." With this assessment I heartily concur.

The book is little, but rich. More than just a commentary, it is "a Digest of Reformed Comment." That is, the author intersperses his own comments with frequent, and often lengthy, quotations from other Reformed scholars. When Wilson cannot say it better than they, he does not try.

Consequently, the book opens one up to the views of Calvin, Hendriksen, Leon Morris, Lenski, F. F. Bruce, etc., on the epistles of Paul.

This little gem can be read profitably by each minister; in fact the 6 volumes in the series by the same author ought to find a home in each pastor's library. But, the volume will be particularly helpful for each layman in his individual or group study on the epistles of Paul to Thessalonica. Thoroughly Reformed, it is concise and easy to read. It is not freighted with Greek words, or even transliterations. Yet the exegesis of the author is clearly evident.

Other titles in the series by this author include *Romans, I and II Corinthians* (2 volumes), *Galatians*, and *Hebrews*. If these are as rich as the one on Thessalonians, the series is a treasury for both laymen and pastors alike.

**PARSON TO PERSON** by Calvin D. Vander Meyden; 69 pages; Vantage Press, 516 West 34th Street, New York, N.Y., 10001; \$5.95. Reviewed by John Vander Ploeg.

This little volume, *Parson to Person*, because of its style and content, makes for reading without effort. Only 69 pages, its worth, however, is out of all proportion to its brief compass. A quilt," according to the author, "is made up of many colors and pieces. The ministry is something like that. It too is made up of many bits and pieces. It is a profession of many dimensions, hues, and colors."

And that's what *Parson to Person* is all about. The writer is Rev. Calvin D. Vander Meyden, pastor of the CRC of Jamestown, Michigan. Previous pastorates at Monsey, New York, and at Flanders Valley, New Jersey, have obviously contributed much to enrich the writer's pastoral experience that he relates in a delightful and sprightly style. Never "preachy," Vander Meyden's pastoral vignettes alternate between the joys and the sorrows, the heights and the depths, as again and again they leave the reader with one capsule-sermon after another, and right on target.

For today's *parson* to speak meaningfully to today's *person* (young or old)

is an art that is so hard to come by while also so sorely needed. *Parson to Person* reminds one of the "apples of gold in pictures of silver" (Prov. 25:11). May this book, his first, certainly not prove to be Pastor Vander Meyden's last.

Ours is a generation surfeited with a diet of bad books that are sinking readers ever deeper into the mire of all that is bad. How desperately we and our young people today need books that will help us on the way to heaven! Learned tomes are always needed for study and instruction. However, if our woefully illiterate generation is not to perish for a lack of knowledge, wholesome and light reading, such as *Parson to Person* affords, is also truly essential.

**COMMENTARY ON ROMANS** by F. L. Godet. Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1977. 531 pp. \$12.95. Reviewed by Rev. Henry Vanden Heuvel.

Kregel Publications of Grand Rapids has done a good service to the English reader in reprinting some of the commentaries first published over a century ago. Among these reprints is this commentary on Romans by F. L. Godet. Professor Godet who died in 1900 spent all of his 88 years in the French speaking area of Switzerland. He was professor of Biblical exegesis in the seminary of the National Swiss Church. His commentaries are familiar to ministers of the gospel today.

Godet's treatment of the great epistle to the Romans is generally good. He is a good scholar, and his insight into the thought of Paul is very helpful. However, the theology that Godet espouses is not always the theology of the apostle Paul. Indeed, some of his interpretations are much closer to the Arminian interpretation of God's saving work, an interpretation condemned by the great Synod of Dort. It would be helpful here to point out the tendency in Godet's thought which must be watched in this commentary. This Arminian tendency is especially brought out in his treatment of the passages dealing with election and predestination in Romans 8-11. Commenting on Romans 8:29, "For whom he foreknew, them he also predestinated," Godet says that the "foreknowledge" of God here referred to by Paul means that God knew beforehand who would respond in faith to the command of the gospel. And knowing that fact, God then responded in predestination.

What helps the Reformed reader is the Appendix written by T. W. Chambers in which this man attacks the interpretations presented in the commentary by Professor Godet. This Appendix appeared first in the English edition in 1883, and is now included in the reprint by Kregel's.

Godet's interpretation of Romans 7 is also out of harmony with most Reformed scholars. He claims that Paul writes this chapter from his experience as an unbeliever "whose conscience, awakened by the law, has entered sincerely, with fear and trembling, but still in his own

strength, into the desperate struggle against evil."

These two examples from the *Commentary on Romans* should make the reader cautious. This is not to say that Godet is not an able commentator on the whole. Most of the work is fine. But unfortunately, the crucial passages which teach the distinctiveness of the Gospel are often given an unreformed interpretation.

**ADVENTURES IN TRAINING THE MINISTRY: A HONDURAN CASE STUDY IN THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION BY EXTENSION** by Kenneth B. Mulholland. Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1976. 219 pp. Reviewed by Dr. Roger S. Greenway.

Theological Education by Extension (TEE) has been called the most significant development in theological education in the twentieth century. North American pastors and church leaders should not pass by this book on the assumption that it has nothing to say to their needs and situation. TEE is new; and while it is largely based in the Third World countries today, it will very likely make an impact on ministerial training in North America tomorrow. No Christian leader should be uninformed about TEE, and for missionaries and mission executives a thorough acquaintance with the movement is indispensable.

Kenneth Mulholland has given us a fascinating and highly readable account of his own experience in developing a TEE program to fit the needs of the Evangelical and Reformed Church of Honduras. The book's nineteen chapters are divided into four sections, the first of which deals with the Latin American context and the factors which converge on theological education in that part of the world today.

Part II gives an overview of the history of TEE, and part III tells the story of extension education as it was developed in the Evangelical and Reformed Churches of Honduras. For those who are vitally involved in mission work, this section is perhaps the most interesting, for the problems which arose in relationship to the Synod of the national church have many parallels in other parts of the world.

The last section of the book deals with some of the basic questions relating to TEE: whether it promotes church growth; what can be done to provide pre-theological education for those who have little or no previous schooling; problems of accreditation; the role of the teacher and the use of programmed textbooks, and the relationship and relative importance of residence and extension education.

There is an urgent need in the TEE movement for solid Reformed textbooks and other programmed materials, in a variety of languages and at various academic levels. I hope that Mulholland's book stimulates interest in Reformed circles to support and give leadership to this dynamic new movement.



**DICTIONARY - HANDBOOK TO HYMNS FOR THE LIVING CHURCH** by Donald P. Hustad; 364 pages; Hope Publishing Co., Carol Stream, Ill. 60187; \$12.95. Reviewed by John Vander Ploeg.

Authentic background material about the writing of familiar hymns may enrich the appreciation and the singing of them at the church services or at song fests. The following excerpt from Hustad's *Dictionary-Handbook* on the hymn, "When Peace Like a River Attendeth My Way," illustrates the point:

"These words were written by Horatio G. Spafford following the loss of four daughters in an accident at sea. The family was scheduled to travel to Europe in November, 1873. Being delayed by last minute business developments, Spafford sent his wife and the girls on ahead. In mid-ocean their ship, the French liner *Ville du Havre*, collided with an English sailing ship and foundered. Mrs. Spafford only was saved and cabled her husband, 'Saved alone.' Spafford started immediately for Europe and, while on the high seas near the scene of the tragedy, wrote this hymn."

Dr. Donald P. Hustad, author of this dictionary-handbook, formerly director of the Sacred Music Department at Moody Bible Institute and organist for Billy Graham Crusades, now serves as a professor of church music and organ at the School of Church Music, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky. He has been active in the compiling and editing of various hymnals and was also one of the consultants for the *Armed Force Service Book* (1974). Obviously Hustad is knowledgeable in hymnology and qualified for what he has undertaken in this *Dictionary-Handbook* as Senior Editor of Hope Publishing Company.

Included in this volume are background information on 591 hymns and their tunes; a dictionary of authors and composers alphabetically arranged; a helpful bibliography; a serviceable index; and also the History of Hope Publishing Company and its Divisions and Affiliates.

"A hymnal handbook," says Hustad, "achieves its best destiny when it is used by ministers and church musicians to help make this happen. It is for them and their ministry that this book is presented."

**WILLIAM JAY** - An autobiography. First published in 1854. In 1974 published by Banner of Truth Trust, Box 652, Carlisle, Pa. 17013; 586 pages, \$7.95. Reviewed by Rev. John Kruis, pastor of the Sussex CRC.

William Jay (1769-1853) lived and labored in the golden age of the Puritans. He began preaching already at the age of sixteen and preached until shortly before his death at the ripe age of eighty-four. By the age of nineteen he was already preaching in London's largest nonconformist churches.

William Jay is another inspiring example of what the Lord can and does

accomplish by His power and grace through much hard work. He was born and reared of very humble, poor parents. It was only through hard and long hours of work, with God's blessing, that he received his education and realized the ambition to be a minister of the gospel. After attaining that goal he was always intent upon being a better preacher.

Mr. Jay stood solidly in the Puritan tradition. However, he was quite independent in his thinking and did not want to be bound by creeds.

Jay was evidently a man with many talents and was recognized by his contemporaries as one of the giants of his day. People from many nations, including prominent church leaders, sought opportunity to be blessed through his preaching. His writings, some of which are included in this book, also received wide acceptance.

This book is not, strictly speaking, only an autobiography. Part III, pages 263 to page 475, contains "Reminiscences of Distinguished Contemporaries." However, it is interesting and profitable to read such from the pen of one who was a contemporary of such notables as John Newton, William Wilberforce, and John Wesley.

This book has one serious flaw. A disproportionate amount of space is taken up by both Mr. Jay himself and the editors in relating activities and quoting letters in which Mr Jay received high honors from his contemporaries.

**IT'S GOOD TO KNOW** by Dave Balsiger; 233 pp., price \$5.95 in hard cover, \$2.95 in soft cover; publisher Mott Media, 342 Main St., Milford, Mich. 48042. Reviewed by Rev. Frank De Jong, pastor emeritus of San Jose CRC, San Jose, California.

If you have seen the latest two Billy Graham films "Time To Run" and "Isn't It Good To Know" you have seen the main character of this book act in person before you - Randy Bullock, the leading actor of these films. In "Isn't it Good To Know" Randy Bullock tells the story of his life to the writer of his biography, Dave Balsiger.

The Introduction to this book is written by Dr. Don Williams, professor at Claremont College, Claremont, California. He writes, "Randy pulled no punches in writing a hard, real account of his personal odyssey. . . . Here is a struggle and search for a father's love, for meaning in the context of sex, drugs, and revolution. Here is crime and hustling on the streets of New York. Here is rivalry with a talented brother who marries Karen - Randy's fiancée. Here is divine intervention and a story of emerging Christian community. . . . Be prepared to be jolted, entranced and lifted as he tells his story."

That briefly summarizes what is written in this book. It is the true account of a young man who was, through the preaching of the Word of God, turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God. I can highly

recommend it for reading, especially for young people so that they may have some understanding of what it means to be enslaved by the devil's soul-destroying poison of dope and drugs. At the same time, this story is once more a marvelous demonstration of God's saving grace, showing again how the gospel is indeed "the power of God unto salvation for all who believe."

**A HISTORY OF THE CHURCHES IN THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA**, by Robert T. Handy. Oxford University Press, New York, 1976. 471 pp. \$19.95. Reviewed by Rev. Jerome M. Julien, pastor of the First CRC of Pella, Iowa.

The first of a projected twenty volume Oxford History of the Christian Church, this volume covers the history of religion on the North American continent. Giving proportionate space to Canada and the United States, the Protestant churches and the Church of Rome, this book gives an overall view of religion here with a special emphasis on the social issues which have made an impact on the Church. The cults are discussed briefly, too. One helpful feature of the volume is the abundant reference to other writings on the specific subjects mentioned only in passing and the helpful bibliography of some 22 pages.

One gets the feeling that the author is definitely ecumenically-oriented. Also, the reader will become uncomfortable with Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses classed with legitimate Protestant denominations.

In laying out the broad strokes of the history of religion in America the author has done a commendable job, though the reader may disagree with his interpretation of the facts.

The further volumes of this set are to be anticipated. Whether they will out-strip Latourette in value remains to be seen.

**PREUS OF MISSOURI AND THE GREAT LUTHERAN CIVIL WAR** by James E. Adams; 242 pages; Harper & Row, Publishers, \$10. Reviewed by John Vander Ploeg.

However dull and tedious some biographies may prove themselves to be, not so here as James E. Adams, career newspaper reporter, gives his well-documented account of the life and labors of Dr. Jacob A. O. Preus so closely tied up with the recent developments in the LC-MS (Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod).

Dr. Jacob Aall Ottesen Preus (commonly known as Jack Preus), president of the 2.8 million member LC-MS since 1969 is portrayed by Adams at full length and as an unusually dynamic and intriguing personality, which comports with my own impression after a brief encounter with and also a further observation of him a few years ago at a theological convocation held at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis. According to

Jack Preus is a "complicated, scrappy, brilliant church executive with a strong, potentially destructive stubbornness." He and his scholarly brother Robert are sons of a two-term governor of Minnesota, Jake Preus. Commendatory but also critical, Adams portrays Jack as an unusually astute administrator but also as "a church politician." One wonders whether a biographer likeminded with the blurb on the jacket of the book, Jack Preus in his "battle for the Bible" — which Adams definitely is not — might not have found it possible to present Preus in a more favorable light.

Notwithstanding Adams' obvious sympathy for the so-called "moderates" and their "new hermeneutics" they advocated at Concordia Seminary, he does try hard to give Preus his due and he also clearly discerns and depicts what the bitter infighting of Missouri was all about. As a religion editor and writer for the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, Adams was close enough to the scene of battle to know and to report that which was going on. Unfortunately, he cannot tell the story without having his own predilections come through. Notwithstanding his apparent waffling and contradictory behavior at times, Jack Preus fought like a tiger for the authority and inerrancy of the Bible, and he was used of the Lord to do something unprecedented in modern church history: the conservatives gained control of Concordia Seminary and the liberals who were a large majority of the faculty and students had no choice left except to shape-up or to ship-out — and ship-out they did in large numbers so that Concordia must have looked as if it might not survive. The amazing comeback Concordia has made since the purge is a thrilling account of what the Lord can do.

At such a time as this in the CRC, as we are engaged in our own "battle for the Bible," the discerning reader may find it well worth his while and ten dollars well spent to get a close-up view of Missouri's conflict as portrayed by a writer — wrong as he may be in his sympathies — of unusual ability, one who tells the story in a style that holds the reader's interest from start to finish.

**DEVOTIONALS FOR TEACHERS**  
by Nelle A. Vander Ark. Published by Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Mich., 1975; 80 pages; \$3.50. Reviewed by John W. Borst.

This little book could only have been written by a teacher. The fifty little briefs have such captivating titles as: Classroom Climate: Know Their Names, Get Rid of Negative Attitudes, Discipline — Deal Gently, or again, Discipline — Get Tough.

With a Scripture passage heading each chapter, the devotionals show touching insights into a host of relationships, that have been sensitized by the unique relationships that are enjoyed by a teacher and her pupils.

The human reactions are so open and genuine that the reader cannot help but relate to the experiences presented. The Christian life has its stress. There are problems, moments of sorrow, broken relationships, mistaken judgments. But the healing power of God's Word is always there, to buoy up the spirit and to give a new and beautiful impetus to day-by-day living.

The chapter entitled, "Teaching is a Two-Way Street" reminds us of the fact that teachers learn from their pupils. The author repeatedly emphasizes that her life has been enriched by what she has gained from others.

This book is meant for reflection. It stimulates the reader to appreciate the little and less apparent relationships in life; those which we so easily overlook, but which when recognized, give a depth dimension to life itself that will have lasting rewards. Recommended for parents, too!

**FRESH WIND OF THE SPIRIT**, by Kenneth Cain Kinghorn, Abingdon Press, Nashville, Tenn. \$2.95, 128 pp., 1975. Reviewed by Rev. Wilmer R. Witte.

In the preface, the author states that he has "tried to tread the middle way between heavy theology . . . and light devotional thoughts." He has succeeded. This is not a technical book on the theology of the Holy Spirit. Practical ways are provided in which the believer can

become more conscious of and directed by the Holy Spirit in his life. The contents do not form a repetition of charismatic literature that is flooding the religious book market. He warns against extremes of subjectivism and objectivism regarding the work of the Holy Spirit. On p. 105, "As important as the Holy Spirit is, we ought not to center our attention upon him. To do so is to open ourselves to a highly subjective kind of religious experience and to miss the point of his ministry."

In a few of the early chapters there appears to be confusion as to relation of regeneration to conversion (p. 33), and the order of salvation is not that which you find in Reformed theology (pp. 28-35).

If the reader is looking for help in his spiritual growth and joy, he will find it in this book. *Fresh Wind of the Spirit* could use some fresh air to clear away the smog of thought relative to the order of salvation.

**THE CHILD'S STORY BIBLE** by Catherine F. Vos, revised by Marianne Radius. William B. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1977. 436+xx pp., paper, \$9.95. Reviewed by Rev. Jerome M. Julien, pastor of the First CRC, Pella, Iowa.

This book has been around for a long time. Children who first heard stories from it are now reading from it to their children . . . and they should, too.

The original book, so long a favorite, has been revised by the author's daughter by updating the language and by incorporating many archaeological discoveries. In addition, illustrations by Betty Beeby were added. Whether they are additions will depend on the taste of the user. If the more modern form of illustration is appreciated the book will be well received. On the whole, however, the book is an attractively printed volume.

Parents will find this to be a helpful book in the home aspect of covenant training. Children from 3 to 13, according to the jacket, will benefit from the volume. One caution: this book should never be allowed to take the place of the Bible in that training.



THE OUTLOOK is indebted to Rev. Jerome M. Julien, pastor of the First Christian Reformed Church of Pella, Iowa for having provided this Index to the contents of the issue of 1978.

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by REV. JEROME JULIEN

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