

THE OUTLOOK

DEVOTED TO THE EXPOSITION AND DEFENSE OF THE REFORMED FAITH

OCTOBER 1979



A VISIT TO CHINA
UPSET PRIORITIES
HOMOSEXUAL SUES CHURCH

A VISIT TO CHINA

An Address To the CRC Synod of 1979

Isaac Jen

Rev. Isaac Jen, Minister of Chinese Broadcasting on the Back to God Hour provided us with a copy of his address to the CRC Synod immediately after his return from a visit to mainland China. He was for many years one of our missionaries in Taiwan.

Mr. President, esteemed delegates, it is a great pleasure and privilege for me to be able to appear before you and to speak to you for a few moments on behalf of the Back to God Hour. As Dr. Nederhood just mentioned, my wife and I came back from China only two days ago.

After thirty years of absence, we were able to receive a visa from the Government of the People's Republic of China to visit our relatives in Shanghai, and also to visit our relatives in Peking and to see some of the sights in the great nation.

I would like to share with you some of our experiences and observations. The first thing that struck us as we entered into China from the Hongkong side, was that everyone there could speak and understand the common language, which is familiarly known here as Mandarin, but it is now known in China as P'o t'ung hua, or the common spoken dialect. It has tremendous implications for radio ministry because today we could use one voice, speaking the Mandarin dialect, to reach almost a billion people. Canton, as you know, is in the south. In the past, hardly any Cantonese could understand or speak Mandarin; but today, everywhere we went we spoke to different types of people — gatekeepers, university students, hotel employees, travel service employees, people on the streets — all of them, without exception, could understand my questions, to direct me to certain places where I wanted to go, and, without exception, they could all respond in Mandarin.

There is also the intense interest in Christianity since the establishment of diplomatic relations between the United States of America and the People's Republic of China. One of the journalists from China visited this country last year. Afterwards, he wrote a series of articles in Chinese in the People's Daily, the official newspaper of the government, in which he mentioned that President Carter has a Bible on the desk in his office, and that there are millions of Americans who still believe in God. He is puzzled and I know that millions of Chinese people are puzzled because, according to Marxism, religion is the opium of the people. It was supposed to be invented by the ruling class to keep the poor people in line. And yet they know today in America, the most advanced industrialized nation, there are

millions of people who believe in God, who believe in religion, and who believe in the God of Christianity. So many people, especially the young university students, ask me how is it that today there are so many Christians in America, and what is really the basic belief of Christianity? So even though we went to China as visitors to see our relatives, we were able, on various occasions, to respond and to explain briefly the basic tenets of the Christian faith.

One of the highlights of our visit was attending a church service in the only Protestant church that is open in Peking today. It met in a former Bible Society building with about 50 people attending. More than 30 were Chinese, local Chinese people. And there were three or four from diplomatic personnel from Africa, and a few from Europe and a few from America of Chinese descent. My eyes welled up with tears as I stood with these Chinese people to sing the song which also appears in our Psalter Hymnal, "The heavens declare the glory of God." Even though there were only about 50 people, yet this small group of worshippers represented four continents — Africa, Europe, America, and Asia. At the end of the service, we all took communion together. In a group of 12, we came forward. The minister administered the communion to all of us. It was an experience very difficult to forget.

After the service I talked to the minister and he wanted me to convey the greetings from the church of China to the churches abroad. And I assured him that the churches outside of China have not forgotten the Christians in China, and that many have been praying for them during the last thirty years.

There are still restrictions, as far as the buildings are concerned, and there's a lack of ministers. Most of the ministers now present are very old and there is a lack of younger ministers. We have heard that there are more than 300 groups meeting regularly in Shanghai. And just before we left China, I heard from the sister of a preacher that her brother is once again allowed to preach the gospel. And we heard also of other places where there are small groups meeting, and that the government has officially allowed churches to reopen if they can find the places, because most of the buildings have been occupied by other organizations during the last twelve years. The church that I used to attend in Shanghai is now a printing shop, and the church where my wife's father was a member is today a high school.

But God works in marvelous ways. Even though the churches are closed, even though the ministers are few, and even though in appearance the Christian church in China is in low tide, yet God, in His marvelous way, raised up this new instrument of radio airwaves. By radio broadcast, we could use one program and reach literally millions of people. While in China, I bought a radio made in China, I turned to our station and I could hear my own voice which had been recorded ten thousand miles away. Very clearly, as if it had come from a local station. I am sure there are many, many people who are listening to this broadcast.

In the last few months, each month we have received more than 100 letters. And on the basis of

the estimate of one letter representing a thousand listeners, in May alone, we probably have more than 100,000 listeners.

We have two types of programs. One is bilingual with English and Chinese, based on the Back to God Hour's TODAY program, and the other is preaching. It is interesting to note that more than 50% of the letters are in response to our preaching program rather than to the bilingual English/Chinese program. Many of the people say that they would like to know more about Christianity. They want to receive the New Testaments which we offer on the air. They like to receive the bilingual lessons which we also offer on the air. And we have heard from some of the listeners that they have received the New Testament book as well as the bilingual lesson sheets.

We also know that the Back to God Hour program on KTWR is drawing more letters than all the other Chinese programs combined. And on the other network of Far East Broadcasting Company, aside from the pure English conversational lesson, we usually rank high. I say this not to be proud, but I share it with you because we at the Back to God Hour are working in the name of the Christian Reformed Church and you are delegates of the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church. So let us rejoice together that even though the door to China seems to be closed as far as the organized church is concerned, yet with radio waves we are reaching hundreds and thousands of people every month.

We know as a fact that more than 80% of the Chinese households own at least one radio. In every home that I entered when I was in China, I saw at least one radio. Many of these radios are shortwave, in contrast to those of people in the United States who usually have only AM & FM radios. So there is a golden opportunity today when the government is relaxing its restrictions and when the people are intensely interested in America, in all things American. Not only technological developments and inventions, but also the religion which many of the Americans believe in. And we are thankful to God that the Christian Reformed Church is not slow in beginning this Chinese program in the name of the Back to God Hour, and we hope that as the government relaxes more and more, more people will be able to listen and to respond to our program.

So far we have received letters from every province in China except for one and a few autonomous regions where only minorities live. We have received letters even from inner Mongolia. We also have received letters from some of the autonomous regions in the southwest of China because the government has been sending high school graduates and college graduates to these areas. So we know that China, which has almost one billion people today, can hear the gospel via radio no matter where they live — north or south, east or west, or in the central part of Shanghai — because the unified language has made it possible for us to broadcast and to bring the Good News of Jesus Christ to all of these people.

Thank you. ●

THE OUTLOOK

(USPS 633-980)



"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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UPSET PRIORITIES

Peter De Jong

“Work not for the food which perisheth, but for the food which abideth unto eternal life which the Son of man shall give unto you” (John 6:27).

An often observable characteristic of churches which are in the process of losing the gospel under the pressure of Liberalism is that they become preoccupied with social and political programs. Becoming disinterested in matters of Christian doctrine, they become agitated about meeting all kinds of material needs, solving social problems, correcting inequities, ensuring that everyone, or at least certain groups get their “rights,” etc. Such activities seem much more “real,” “meaningful,” “practical,” and “important” than many churches’ traditional concerns.

One can readily think of many ways in which this shift of emphasis comes to expression. Read the reports of major church assemblies, conventions and synods. Consider the activities of the World Council of Churches. Watch the development of mission fields as various social and material “auxiliary” services originally intended to help in bringing the gospel, begin to take most if not almost all of the money, personnel and activity of the mission organizations.

Attraction to Socialism

This preoccupation with social and political causes makes these liberalizing churches increasingly sympathetic with the socialist movement which has the same preoccupation, and susceptible to communist propaganda and sometimes even usable as communist “fronts.” About 20 years ago, Paul Denlinger, Episcopal Missionary to China wrote in the March 14, 1960 *Christianity Today* (pp. 3-5) of how this process had worked in China. His fascinating article appeared under the title, “The Bleak Harvest of the Liberal World Thrust.” He wrote, “for many modern religious leaders ‘socialism’ plays the same role that ‘heaven’ did for their grandparents. It is that goal to be pursued above all others, the end-point of their religious affections. In a manner well known to all religions, they stimulate widespread dissatisfaction with the status quo. . . they dispose people toward change. This is the political parody of the conviction of sin and the offer of salvation.

“Unfortunately, however, the churches cannot offer political salvation. While they try to lobby and engage in political action in a rather feeble way, the public will not permit them to play a purely political role. In the field of pure politics they have neither the intelligence nor the resources of the Communist

Party. Thus, in many cases, liberal Christianity scatters the seed and the Communist Party reaps the harvest.” The social gospel has been a virtual ‘tutor unto communism.’

“Those who have eyes to see are witnessing a marvelous demonstration of how false gods destroy their devotees. The liberal Christian West has cemented an alliance with political and social forces dedicated to its destruction. Wherever the Communists gain political control, they forcefully suppress Christianity as an opiate of the people. Liberal Christianity uncritically collaborates in its own destruction.”

Bringing those observations down to the present, we can note in our time how the World Council of Churches continues to give large amounts of money to the African guerilla movements which have been murdering missionaries and other Christians and destroying their missions. And consider how our President Carter, despite his profession as an evangelical Christian, continues his support of those guerillas against the new, elected black-led Rhodesian government, despite the appeal of the bishop who leads the government to our President to alter his stand.

The Shift Among Us

Turning to the developments in our own denomination, we can see many indications of the shift of emphasis to social, economic and political matters, although it has not yet gone as far in that direction as such a shift has gone among the outspokenly Liberal churches. We notice the prominence of such matters in the agendas of our synods and of the RES and the conferences dealing with them which are held at our colleges. We are hearing and will hear more of a program to not only relieve world hunger, but also to “restructure” societies which are seen as contributing to it.

Plausible Arguments

We are finding that it is not easy to be critical of these things because they can often make plausible claims to receiving Christian sympathy and support. Must we not feed the hungry? Hasn't the Lord taught us to love the poor? Isn't it our duty to try to correct injustices? Don't we as Christians have to oppose racial discrimination? Don't we who hold the Reformed ideal of seeking to apply the whole gospel to the whole of life have to involve ourselves in all of these economic, social and political matters? Must we not seek to maintain, in action as well as talk,

Christ's claim as King over every area of life? Do we not have to criticize and break away from the mistaken practice of many evangelical Christians around us who have often treated the gospel as a thing apart from these earthly concerns and responsibilities? Don't all of these considerations compel us to give unstinting support to our churches' material, social and political programs? If the socialists have majored in these concerns shouldn't we either support and join them, or try to take over the initiative which evangelical Christians have often left to them?

These are the kinds of questions and arguments that would move us, as they are moving many around us, to go along with or promote the trend which we are considering. The arguments might be irresistible if it were not for one objection. That objection arises out of considering what the Lord actually did and taught in His Gospel.

The Lord Feeds Thousands

An incident which we may find especially helpful to us in dealing with these currently troublesome questions is that of the Lord's feeding of over 5,000 people. The Apostle John gives us the most extensive of the four accounts of it in the sixth chapter of His gospel. The Lord was obviously concerned in ministering to people's material needs as he miraculously fed over 5,000 of them when they were hungry. And he taught his followers a lesson in responsible stewardship as he ordered them to gather up the food that remained, that nothing be lost" (vs. 12).

The Gospel's Priority

This chapter of John's gospel, unlike the other accounts, tells us what followed this event and the Lord's teaching about it. A free lunch for these thousands of hungry people moved the multitudes immediately to acknowledge Him as the promised Prophet and to determine to "take him by force, to make him king" (vs. 15). They were all eager to accept and follow this kind of Messiah. The Lord, instead of endorsing and trying to work along with this popular acceptance of Him, immediately dismissed the crowd and evaded it. Not to be put off that easily, the people looked for him and when they found him the next day wanted him to repeat what he had done the day before. This He absolutely refused to do, explaining, "Work not for the food which perisheth, but for the food which abideth unto eternal life, which the Son of man shall give unto you" (vs. 27). They looked for and (as usual) found Biblical and theological arguments to support their wishes, referring to Moses and the 40-year free-food program of the manna in the wilderness. The Lord corrected their misuse of the Scriptures and pointed out that their fathers who had eaten the manna for 40 years died but that what He had come to bring and to be to men would give eternal life.

In refusing to continue giving the people miraculous free food and, more broadly, to be the

kind of Messiah and to give them the kind of material and political gospel which they wanted, the Lord quickly antagonized them and lost their enthusiastic adherence. He deliberately increased the offense to them by teaching them the difficult doctrines about Himself which they could not understand. He explained the purpose of his coming and the character of his work by stating very bluntly what often was, and to this day (also in the Christian Reformed Church) often appears to be the most offensive doctrine of all, that of Predestination (positive and negative) and of the absolute sovereignty of God! He said, "I am come down from heaven, not to do mine own will but the will of him that sent me" and "No man can come to me except the Father that sent me draw him: and I will raise him up in the last day" (vss. 36-40, 43-45).

The bearing of all of this upon our problems is evident. The Lord plainly taught and showed that the character of His Gospel was not determined by people's desires or even their "felt needs." It was in no way controlled by their opinions of "cultural" or "historical conditions." His role and program was not determined or even influenced by majority vote — not even by the vote of his followers. If God's predetermined and revealed doctrines irritated and antagonized people, He was neither surprised nor influenced by that. And He taught His followers to be prepared for and expect this kind of reaction, and to follow Him in resisting it.

What does this mean for our stance regarding the material, economic, social and political matters which we have been considering? Must a Christian not try to help people around him? Indeed, he must, as the Bible says, "As we have opportunity, let us work that which is good toward all men, and especially toward them that are of the household of faith" (Gal. 6:10). But all of such activities are the results, although necessary results, of our all-controlling commitment to the Lord and His gospel. They must always serve, and may never be permitted to over-shadow or displace the gospel. In contrast with the non-Christians whose *primary* concern is with such matters as food, drink and clothing, the Lord taught, "your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first his kingdom, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. 6:31-33). The difference between the Christian who knows and worships God and the people around him who do not know God and therefore idolize everything else is fundamental, and talk of our Christian economic, social and political responsibilities may never be permitted to obscure or compromise that difference. We all need the warning with which the Apostle John concluded his first letter.

"We know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in the evil one. And the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life. My little children, guard yourselves from idols" (I John 5:19-21). ●

BELIEVE IT OR NOT

The Decree of Reprobation Is Not Horrible

by

Edwin H. Palmer

There are two parts to predestination: election and reprobation. Election is the eternal decree of God, before the world began, by which he chose and foreordained some to be saved. Reprobation is the reverse side of election, whereby God passed some by and left them in their sins. In neither election nor reprobation did God decide because of some merit or lack of merit in man.

These decrees of God are mysterious and awesome. They are mysterious because we cannot understand why God should choose some and not others. But the Bible tells us so. Therefore, the Christian believes it.

These decrees are also awesome because they bring us into the very presence of God — into God's eternal plans that deal with the eternal destiny of all people. Therefore, the Christian trembles — not out of fear, but out of wonderment and humility and awe — overwhelmed by the greatness, majesty and wisdom of God.

John Calvin said that the decree of reprobation was "horribilis," to use his Latin term. Some theological novices have interpreted that to mean that Calvin said that the decree was a horrible one in the sense of being bad.

But, believe it or not, this is a superficial and incorrect reading of the Latin, and Calvin said no such thing. The Latin "horribilis" does not necessarily mean horrible in the bad sense. Far from it. It can also mean "full of awe."

There is a group of English words that are similar in meaning, origin and development to the Latin "horribilis." They are the words "dreadful," "awful," "terrible," "fearful" and "horrible." Originally all these words had the meaning that someone or something inspired awe—a feeling of majesty and overpowering greatness.

Take, for example, the word "terrible." Today that word suggests that someone or something is extremely bad, unpleasant and disagreeable. When we say that a boy has a terrible temper, we mean that he flies off the handle easily, is easily provoked.

But that is not the meaning of terrible when the King James Version quotes Nehemiah as praying, "O LORD God of heaven, the great and terrible

God" (Neh. 1:5). The King James Version does not mean that God is bad and unpleasant — like the Devil. Rather, in 1611 the word "terrible" meant "awesome." So the New International Version captures this idea when it says, "O LORD, God of heaven, the great and awesome God."

Similar examples are seen in the following quotes from the King James Version (we have put the New International Version's translation next to it, lest the reader think that the Bible is blasphemous):

1. Daniel 9:4. KJV: "O, Lord, the great and dreadful God."
NIV: "O Lord, the great and awesome God."
2. Isaiah 64:3. KJV: "When thou didst terrible things."
NIV: "When you did awesome things."
3. Psalm 66:3. KJV: "How terrible art thou in thy works."
NIV: "How awesome are your deeds."
4. Job. 37:22. KJV: "with God is terrible majesty."
NIV: "God comes in awesome majesty."
5. Psalm 99:3. KJV: "Let them praise thy great and terrible name."
NIV: "Let them praise your great and awesome name."
6. Psalm 68:35. KJV: "O God, thou art terrible out of thy holy place."
NIV: "You are awesome, O God, in your sanctuary."

Now the Latin word that Calvin uses to describe the divine decree of reprobation has meanings similar to these English words. The Latin word "horribilis" does not necessarily mean "horrible" in the modern sense of painful, repugnant, loathsome and abhorrent. Rather, the Latin word can mean "dreadful" in the sense of "awesome."

Calvin uses "horribilis" to describe reprobation when he writes: "The decree is awesome" (*Decretum quidem horribile*, *Institutes*, III, xxiii, 7). He does not mean at all that God's decrees and plans are abhorrent, loathsome and repugnant. But he uses "horribilis" in the same sense that he does in III, xx, 17, where he applies the adjective "horribilis" to the majesty of God. There Calvin is thinking of coming by prayer into the very presence of God. Instead of tripping in lightly and nonchalantly, Calvin thinks of how great God is and how un-

Dr. Palmer is Executive Secretary of the New International Version of the Bible.

worthy we are to come into his awesome presence. Calvin says, "For as soon as God's awesome majesty [horribilis Dei maiestas] comes to mind, we cannot but tremble and be driven far away by the recognition of our own unworthiness, until Christ comes forward as intermediary to change the throne of dreadful [formidabilis] glory into the throne of grace." Far be it from Calvin to call God's majesty or glory "horrible" or "abhorrent."

And in exactly the same way does Calvin apply the Latin term "horribilis" to the decree of reprobation. Reprobation is a decree that causes one to tremble in wonder and adoration at the actions of the infinite, eternal, holy and wise Creator God.

So, contrary to what some who oppose the Biblical doctrine of reprobation would have us believe, believe it or not, Calvin did not teach that reprobation was a horrible decree. He said it was an "awesome decree." ●

HOMOSEXUAL SUES CHURCH

Roger Wagner

The pastor of the Calvary Orthodox Presbyterian Church of Sonora California sent us this letter which will interest our readers.

Dear Rev. De Jong,

As a member of the Presbytery of Northern California of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, I am writing to you as one concerned for the truth of God's Word and the furtherance of His righteousness to inform you of an attack against the Church of Jesus Christ that will have national repercussions.

You may have already heard that First Orthodox Presbyterian Church of San Francisco has been *sued* by homosexuals under the provisions of a recently enacted municipal statute prohibiting discrimination based on "sexual orientation." Briefly the facts are these. A young man had been hired last year as the church organist, and although he was not a member of the church, he professed to be a Christian. After a while it came to the attention of the pastor, the Rev. Charles McIlhenny, that this man was a homosexual. Pastor McIlhenny confronted the man with the charge, and the young man freely admitted that he was a practicing homosexual. Mr. McIlhenny called upon the man to forsake his sin, but the call was refused. In that event the young man's employment as an organist was terminated.

Shortly thereafter the church was contacted by a lawyer and founder/director of Gay Rights Advocates (a legal organization dedicated to furthering homosexual "rights" through litigation), threatening a lawsuit under the new San Francisco ordinance. No action was taken by the homosexual plaintiff for 10 months, but at the end of June this year the suit was filed against Pastor McIlhenny, the congregation, and the Presbytery as co-defendants.

All three defendants have retained the same lawyer, Mr. John Whitehead, to prepare and lead our defense. Mr. Whitehead is a Christian and a Constitutional lawyer associated with the Christian Law Association. He presented our answer to the suit to the court on August 15th.

Like us you are undoubtedly shocked at the high-handedness of these rebellious men against God and his Church, daring to challenge the freedom of the Church to obey the clear requirements of Scripture, and attempting to force the Church to conform to the doctrines and commandments of men. Such are the days in which we live. Nevertheless we are determined to fight this attack with all our resources, calling upon the King of Kings to vindicate His cause before all men. The outcome of this litigation, as you can well realize, will have dramatic implications for all our Reformed and evangelical churches, and for our nation and the freedom we have so long enjoyed.

I write to give you this information so that you can enter into the battle with us by *praying* earnestly that God will utterly defeat this attack against his Church, and move our land back to that righteousness that "exalts a nation." We also hope that you will be willing to make this information available to others through *The Outlook*, so that all who love God and his Word may oppose this godlessness with one voice.

Finally, the financial resources of our little church are limited, and already legal fees must be paid. A defense fund has been established under the trusteeship of a three-man commission of Presbytery (headed by Mr. McIlhenny) to receive contributions toward the defense expenses. Checks can be made out to "The Christian Rights Defense Fund" and sent to First Orthodox Presbyterian Church, 1350 Lawton, St., San Francisco, CA 94122.

If you have questions or desire more information, please feel free to contact me, or perhaps better contact Mr. McIlhenny directly (phone number 415-564-8180 or write the above address), and we will give you all the information we have. Thank you for your interest and prayerful help.

We are but a David tangling with an awesome political Goliath, and public sympathy is largely with Goliath. But he has challenged Jehovah our God, who will not be mocked. May the Lord rise up in victory and his Word triumph! ●

Your servant for the King,

Rev. Roger Wagner, *pastor*
14892 Peaceful Valley Rd.
Sonora, Calif 95370

NOUTHETIC COUNSELING II

HELPING TO CORRECTLY IDENTIFY PROBLEMS

John Kruis

Rev. John Kruis writes about the method of biblical counseling developed especially by Dr. Jay Adams. This second article further explains the method and answers a criticism of it. Rev. Kruis is pastor of the Christian Reformed Church of Sussex, New Jersey.

Nouthetic counselors also help to correctly identify problems, which are usually sinful attitudes, sinful patterns of behavior or life-style, sinful reactions to life's difficulties and sinful reactions to the attitudes and behavior of others.

A Common Caricature

Now, please do not accept a caricature of nouthetic counseling at this point. Some have pictured a nouthetic counselor as operating something like this:

He gets counselees into his study or office and lets them tell their story. He then interrogates them (as someone has written, "... conducts a witch hunt"). Hastily he identifies the sin problem(s) and lets the counselees know in no uncertain terms that it is sin. The counselor picks up his Bible and gives them a heavy dose of Bible texts as a cure-all. He promptly tells them exactly what they now ought to do . . ."

"Simplistic! Biblicistic! Naive!" they cry. Nonsense! Ridiculous! This ought to be recognized for what it is: a caricature of the nouthetic method of counseling. Such people are either uninformed, ill-informed or governed by prejudice.

Need of Careful Diagnosis

How does a nouthetic counselor go about helping to identify problems? He gathers data in each weekly counseling session — very carefully and thor-

¹Adams' Manual, pp. 252-293. To me, this section on data gathering alone is worth much more than the cost of the book.

²Competent To Counsel, p. 151. See also pp. 148-150 for his explanation of the "Three Dimensions of Problems."

³CF. Adams' Manual, p. 257f.

⁴This was a young man, 19 years old, who was awaiting sentencing for arson, had admitted that he regularly smoked pot, and had just learned that he had gotten his girlfriend pregnant. Yet he wanted no one to tell him what he ought to do. He wanted to manage his own life.

oughly.¹ He gathers data extensively, covering the various areas of life, and intensively, covering in depth those areas in which he discovers a problem. From the counselees he obtains data on the present situation, present attitudes, habits, life style and response patterns. He works hard at getting a clear and accurate picture of how the counselees are functioning in their relationships in the home, the church, among their neighbors, etc. He obtains data weekly on how they are handling life's problems and the progress they are making in solving them. The areas of concentration depend, of course, on the problems which are discovered.

As the data is gathered about the present, the counselor also goes back into the past. He does so, not only in the initial counseling session, but also whenever it will help to get a clearer picture of a problem being worked on or a new one that comes to light in the counseling process. This is essential for getting at the root causes of unsolved problems. Dr. Adams explains it this way, "It is important to review the past thoroughly enough to establish the fact that nonbiblical response patterns are at the root of one's immediate problems. It is necessary to get a general picture of the shape of the response patterns which the client has developed to meet life's difficulties. He needs to be shown the preconditioning problem at the root of the particular problem which he has presented. The weeds will grow again unless they are unrooted."²

Helping a Family With Problems

The effectiveness of using this method to help identify problems is well demonstrated in Donna's case. Donna called one morning to ask if I would "please come over as soon as possible." The presentation problem? Her husband (nominal Roman Catholic) had been insisting for several days that, after eight years of ups and downs in their marriage, he had enough. He was throwing in the towel. Either she had to move out or he would do so. That morning he had informed her that since she had refused to move he would soon be leaving. There would be no more discussion on the matter. The decision was final.

Since Ben was not a home that morning the data gathering was limited to Donna's sins in their marriage, seeking to determine wherein she had contributed to the breakdown of their marriage. Data was gathered extensively on such matters as her faithfulness as a marriage partner and homemaker, her manner of communication, her way of handling problems in their marriage and her relationship to the Lord. In this way we were able to identify some of the problems already in the first counseling session. It was clear that her attitude and behavior had much to do with the marriage breakdown. We began that day to work for change on Donna's part. The result was that Ben did not leave the home as he had threatened to do.

Donna continued with counseling. As we worked on change in each specific problem area of her life, more data was gathered weekly on her current attitudes and behavior and the progress she was mak-

ing. But, also as problem areas were brought to light we would go into her past history in relationship to these matters. In this way we were able to identify her destructive preconditioning problems. For example, it became clear that Donna was an unforgiving person. She habitually got revenge on her husband when he displeased her in any way. She was an habitual nagger and complainer, one who seldom expressed appreciation or gave a compliment. A self-centered person. Obviously Donna had much changing to do. And she really worked on it! Already in the fourth counseling session she said, "The week went great; I can hardly believe it . . . I don't know if this will continue. He seems baffled." She added, "I feel better about myself too. How long did you say it would take for this to become habit?" It was the thorough data gathering on the past, as well as the present, that enabled us to correctly identify the problems. This, coupled with weekly counsel (and homework assignments—to be explained later), brought speedy results.

Escape from Depression

Take also the case of Jim Smith. Jim sought help because of severe "depression." He was so depressed that he had begun to miss work occasionally. And neither he nor his wife could see any good reason for his depression. In the first counseling session I began to probe systematically into various areas of his life — tapped on the walls for studs. He was in good physical health. His marriage relationship was good. They were having no special problems with their children. The relationship with other relatives, neighbors and church members was favorable. What about his job? That was going alright too. But he did say, "What really gets me is those guys who get sick and then get paid for doing nothing . . . I have to work hard for all I get." The halo data³, along with what he said, indicated that I had perhaps hit the stud. So, after extensive data gathering, I returned to this matter. I asked, "What about those people on welfare?" "Yeah, that eats me up too. It *really* gets to me." With much emotion Jim went on to tell of several other parties who were on welfare, while they have nice houses, cars, boats, etc. "They have it a lot better than we do, but I have to work for my money," he added. This indicated some of his performance problems: dwelling on what other people have and how many people apparently get free hand-outs while he has to work for his money. More data gathering on the past made it clear that the root causes of his depression, the preconditioning problems, were a severe case of envy and covetousness, coupled with a non-Christian view of work. As we worked on these problems in succeeding counseling sessions the change was dramatic. By the end of three weeks his depression was gone. However, I continued to work with him for several weeks, helping him to put off the sins of envy and covetousness and to develop a Christian view of work. Again, it was the thorough data gathering each week on both the present and the past that played an important role in the accurate identification of his problems and led to the solutions.

Identifying Problems

It sometimes happens that perplexing problems remain unidentified, and consequently unsolved for several weeks because the needed data has not been brought to light. That can happen because the counselor fails to be as thorough as he should and/or because the counselees carefully keep certain data under cover. This happened in the case of George and Pam. They (recent converts to the Christian faith) had come for help because Dan, her fifteen year old son, was almost continually belligerent and was planning to go to Denver to live with his father. (This was the second marriage for both George and Pam.) Extensive data gathering revealed that unsolved problems had been piling up in their marriage, creating an unhappy home atmosphere. This was largely responsible for Dan's belligerent attitude. Good progress was made in problem solving in the first four weeks of counseling as we worked on the total home situation. But severe problems remained in the sex life of the parents, creating havoc in their marriage relationship. As I reflected on this I began to realize that I had failed to get sufficient data on and to deal thoroughly with one important matter. They had lived together for over two years before getting married (prior to their conversion) because George's divorce had not come through. More intensive data gathering revealed that Pam was still feeling "dirty" and was resenting the way George had continued to insist on the sinful living arrangements prior to their marriage. They were counseled to get all that rubbish cleared away. This had to be confessed before God. They also had to confess to each other and forgive each other. An amazing change soon took place! Once again thorough, intensive data gathering in the one specific area was the key factor in identifying a troublesome problem and led to a speedy solution.

Hurting to Help

"But," you ask, "Don't some people, at least, object to such data gathering, that kind of probing into their personal, marital and family life?" Perhaps some people do. But so far I've had no one object to this. One party did begin to show some uneasiness. But she was soon put at ease as its purpose and value were explained to her.

What happens when counselors identify the problem as sinful attitudes, sinful behavior, sinful reaction to difficult situations or sinful ways of handling life's problems? Doesn't this turn people off? Turn them away? Doesn't this discourage them? No! My experience has confirmed that Jay Adams, and others with him, are right — instead of turning them away, this almost always encourages them. In fact, I have had only one party that did not return for weekly counseling after the first session.⁴ Of course, counselees are also shown from the Scriptures that when they repent of their sin and seek God's forgiveness through Jesus Christ they will be free of their guilt. They are also shown that they can change, and that will lead to a solution of their problems.

A FAITHFUL CHURCH MUST DISCIPLINE

Peter De Jong

Some Editorial Advice

The editor in the August 17 *Banner* stated that the 1979 Synod of the Christian Reformed Church "was a landmark Synod" which might become a "turning-point" in the life of the denomination. He saw it as revealing the presence of a "conservative" majority within the denomination, with which he identifies himself. Whether 1979 will prove to be a real "turning-point," he is convinced, depends on whether and how that "conservative majority" directs and uses its power. His counsel is that this power must not be used negatively, "by going reactionary and lashing out at random against persons and trends and minds among us," "by lopping off the head of a Verhey or a Boer, mistaken as they both seem to me to be" but positively, "by pursuing constructive programs in obedience to the Word." "Put your energies into affirmation of the Truth of the Word and the Confessions—and error will crumple of its own inner hollowness." He sees this proper, positive, confident, conservative course exemplified in the present policy of the "conservative" BANNER which opens its pages to the expression of a variety of contrary opinions (in contrast with the more restrictive editorial policies of other magazines such as the REFORMED JOURNAL or OUT-LOOK). Somehow the conservatives by such an exclusively positive course must surmount the more adroit opposition which frustrated their efforts at the recent Synod, if 1979 is indeed to become a favorable turning-point in the life of the denomination. This is Dr. De Koster's advice.

A Fatal Flaw

It is reassuring to have other observations about the strong conservative representation at our last synod confirmed. And the editor's observations about the way in which that apparent conservative majority were out-manuevered by rigged committees and parliamentary trickery can be confirmed by many observers as well as members of synod. But his suggestion as to the course the "conservative majority" in the denomination ought to adopt, despite its probably wide appeal, has, I am sure, a fundamental flaw which will ensure its failure.

The Need to Be Positive

The flaw in the advice does not lie, as I see it, in the stress on the need to be positive. We do indeed need energetic "affirmation of the Truth of the Word and Confessions" and "constructive programs in obedience to the Word." The Lord ordered that in making "disciples of all nations" we should teach "them to observe all things" which He had commanded" (Mt. 28:19, 20). His apostle taught by precept and example not to "shrink from" "declaring the whole counsel of God," not neglecting "anything that was profitable" as he preached "repentance toward God and faith toward or Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 20:27, 20, 21). The definitive character of the Reformed faith has always been its effort to present and practice this complete Biblical gospel which, as the Apostle Peter put it, includes "all things that pertain to life and godliness" (2 Peter 1:3) and which as Paul said, is inspired of God to be "profitable" "that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work" (2 Tim. 3:17). I'm sure that the present malaise of our churches, which seems to make many of our members, including leaders, susceptible to the lure of empty novelties including those of today's Liberalism, must be the result of wide-spread and long-time neglect of thorough preaching and teaching as well as obedient practice of this "while counsel of God." One hears plenty of complaints about the lack of that both in pulpits and in teaching programs for the children. If a live "conservative" movement is to have any substance and lasting influence it will certainly have to be initiated and sustained by such positive preaching and teaching of our Biblical and confessional Reformed faith.

Obedience to God's Word Requires Discipline

The flaw in the editor's advice, as I see it, lies not in his stress on such a positive program but in his presenting that positive program as an alternative to be pursued instead of trying to discipline those who in faith and life undermine or oppose this Biblically Reformed faith and life. These two are not op-

posites, but the first requires the second. It is impossible to really positively promote the gospel without opposing whatever forces are trying to destroy it. We are told that we must pursue "constructive programs in obedience to the Word." That Word throughout commands us to oppose those who in faith or life turn from or lead away from the gospel and forbids us to tolerate them. Recall Paul's warnings to "turn away from" those who "are causing the divisions and occasions of stumbling, contrary to the doctrine" of the apostles (Rm. 16:17, ef. Tit. 3:10). Recall how he had to order the easy-going, tolerant, Corinthian church to "Put away the wicked man from among yourselves" (1 Cor. 5:13). Remember that the Lord Himself in the letters to the seven churches commended the Ephesian church because it would "not bear evil men" and tried "them that call themselves apostles, and they are not and didst find them false" and because it hated "the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate" (Rev. 2:2 and 6). On the other hand, the Lord sternly rebuked the Pergamum church for tolerating "some that hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit fornication" and also "some that hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans" (2:14, 15). In the same way He rebuked the Thyatira church for tolerating "the woman Jezebel, who calleth herself a prophetess; and she teacheth and seduceth my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed to idols," threatening to bring His own judgments on the unfaithful (2:20ff.). Consider in this connection too His concluding warnings to those who venture to tamper with His Word (22:18, 19) that they would receive His judgments and forfeit a place in His city.

It is because of such clear Biblical directions that our and other Reformed Churches have had to insist that faithful exercise of church discipline was a third "mark" of the true church, an inescapable result of the first such mark, the faithful proclamation of the gospel. To ignore that biblical principle and to explain the exercise of discipline as a mere psychological symptom of insecurity, as the editor does, completely misrepresents the matter. (He himself some time ago rightly warned against this tactic which instead of fairly meeting an argument of principle, dodges it by asking, "Do you feel threatened?") It is not a feeling of insecurity but obedience that compels a faithful Christian church to exercise the discipline commanded by the Lord. And correspondingly, it is not a sense of confidence that moves a church to open its doors to all kinds of false teachings, but an indifference to the commands of its Lord.

He will not let us turn His church from being the "pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Tim. 3:15) into being a mere debating society in which all opinions have equal standing.

Love Requires Discipline

This discipline is not prompted by ill-will. To speak of "lopping off the head of a Verhey or a Boer"

is to caricature and totally misrepresents the motive and purpose of the discipline which the Bible commands. We notice in Matthew 18:5, 6 that it was the Lord's love for His "little ones" that explained some of the sternest warnings he ever uttered concerning the seriousness of causing them "to stumble." And He went on in the following verses to give instructions about how discipline must be exercised in order to prevent or remove such offenses. Dr. Verhey in his examination for ordination said that he wanted the church's supervision. As objections to his views have three times in the last four years been brought to the synods, the synods have three times refused to give the unambiguous answers that he and every other office-holder and member have a right to expect of them. It becomes increasingly obvious that in our time there is no more serious threat to the faith and life of the church than the current attacks on the inerrancy of the Bible. Yet the regrettable fact is that our synods, delinquent in their dealing with such cases, have been increasing the offenses rather than removing them.

The Bible teaches that God who imposes this duty to discipline will hold accountable all who neglect it. To illustrate that truth it recounts in considerable detail the career of Eli, ancient Israel's high-priest and judge. Although he expressed his disapproval of the way in which his sons were disgracing their office he refused to exercise the discipline needed to stop them. For that gross neglect of duty the Lord held him accountable, and brought a judgment upon him and his house which would never end (1 Samuel 2-4).

A Vital Matter

The editor's suggestion in a subsequent *Banner* that a healthy church needs both liberal and conservative minds, while it may apply to minor matters of personal taste or differences of conscience (Rm. 12), does not apply at all to the kind of issues with which we are confronted. To say that a healthy church needs members and leaders who contradict the Bible is as foolish as to say that a body needs a disease such as cancer to maintain health. The Apostle Paul applied this comparison with a cancer (or literally "gangrene") to the teaching of those in the early church who erred concerning the truth of the resurrection (1 Tim. 2:17).

Someone might object that it is inappropriate to apply a warning against a heresy regarding the resurrection to views such as those of Dr. Verhey which, the synod committee stated, concern in each case only a "detail" of interpretation. But that committee allegation is false, as Dr. Verhey emphatically stated in his defense in the *Agenda* (p. 482),

Incidentally, I do not "except" the resurrection from this kind of investigation. Indeed, if this kind of investigation demonstrated that Jesus had not been raised, I would become a Jew. The gospels stake their case on history, after all. But such an investigation, while it cannot "prove" God took Jesus from the dead, clearly demonstrates that it is not historically unreasonable to accept such a claim.

Notice that by this kind of "critical" investigation which he insists must be applied to every Bible fact and teaching including the resurrection he also admits nothing can be "proved;" it can only be shown to be "not historically unreasonable." In other words, not mere "details," but everything in our faith is made debatable by his method.

The last part of the Dutton appeal, which has been ignored by the consistory, classis and synods dealing with the case, shows how this critical approach is applied also to the whole field of Christian moral activity. There this view attacks explicitly the Reformed principle that the Bible is our only rule of faith and life as that is most clearly confessed in Article 7 of our Belgic Confession.

The fact of the matter is that the "higher critical" attack on the Bible, which our churches excluded in their dealing with Dr. Janssen a half century ago and which they now tolerate in the expressed views of Dr. Verhey, Dr. Boer and the number of professors in our college and seminary who defend and use this method, is as destructive of the Christian faith and life as were those early errors regarding the resurrection. As in the case of a cancer, the destructive effects may not be immediately apparent, but if nothing is done to stop this "critical" handling of the Bible it eventually destroys every teaching of the Christian faith. While not everyone who entertains these views may pursue them to their final conclusions, a little study of the history of formerly orthodox, but now liberal churches clearly shows the destructive process at work "eating" its way through the Christian faith and life "like a cancer" until nothing firm or sound is left.

A responsible doctor, on becoming aware that a patient is suffering from cancer, even in a limited area, immediately begins to use whatever methods seem most promising to stop the disease. He tries to save what he can, but sometimes, seeing the life of the patient threatened, he may resort even to radical surgery. The Bible warns us that false doctrines which attack the fundamentals of our faith, such as those regarding the Lord, His resurrection, and his Word, must be opposed and corrected as effectively and quickly as possible. If possible, those who err are to be corrected; if they persist in their error, the church, to be faithful, to its Lord and to save its own faith and life, may have to resort to the surgery of discipline. The Lord, speaking about this matter, said that it is better to lose even a hand or foot "rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire" (Matt. 18:8). Refusal to use this remedy which the Lord ordered is like temporizing with cancer hoping that it will go away of itself. The disease doesn't go away, but gets worse. And delay in treatment may be fatal.

Prospect

If better days are to come for our churches we must not only, as the *Banner* editor suggested, pursue a positive program of teaching and preaching God's Word, but also restore the long—and widely-neglected discipline of faith and life which God's Word commands. One can hardly see how better

times can come for the churches as long as they let their leaders go on denying the Bible which they say they believe, and let those who are training their future ministers teach them to deny it. A "conservative majority" will have to stop the official double-talk of the church and have to oppose and discipline error, if it is effectively to serve the Gospel and is to expect the Lord to prosper it. ●

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LESSONS FROM GENESIS 1 TO 11

Henry Vander Kam

THE TEMPTATION AND FALL OF MAN.

LESSON 5

GENESIS 3:1-7

This is one of the most important and certainly the most tragic chapter in the Bible. All the miseries of man can be traced back to the events recorded in this chapter. This alone would make it most important and tragic. It is also of prime importance because the whole revelation of salvation must be seen against the background of what occurred here.

The method of interpreting this chapter is determinative for the understanding of the rest of the Scriptures. If the things recorded in this chapter are seen as an allegory; if this chapter is considered just "a way of speaking" to describe the entrance of sin into this world; the suffering and death of Jesus Christ are also made questionable. No wonder that the denial of the historicity of Genesis 3 has led some to deny the substitutionary atonement of Christ.

Certainly, there are problems here. A serpent speaking does not agree with our view of natural things. However, there are so many "strange" things recorded in Scripture. Did Balaam's ass speak? Did a fish actually swallow Jonah? Did iron float? Must all such events be erased from the Bible? If the historicity of Genesis 3 is denied how can the historicity of Luke 2 be maintained?—and why should it then be maintained?

As in the account of creation so also in the description of the temptation and fall of man the wording is clear and can be understood by all. Man must not be left in the dark concerning the origin and nature of sin. He must know how it came about and how serious it is so that he may seek the only remedy which God later offers. Then he will realize that he cannot save himself.

Although the account of man's temptation and fall is clear and understandable, it is brief! In a half dozen verses the most important happening is revealed! This teaches us to listen carefully to the words used to describe this event.

The serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which Jehovah God had made. This creature, therefore, belongs to the beasts of the field. The fact that it was more subtle is not to be taken in an evil sense but, rather, in the sense that it was more clever. Jesus counsels those He sends out with the gospel to be "wise as serpents." This serpent

now speaks to the first woman. The serpent is being used by Satan as his tool, as becomes clear in the later part of this chapter and in the New Testament. Satan comes in disguise. The things which are revealed to us here already presuppose a fall in the angelic world. The mighty angel, Satan, was not satisfied with the place assigned him by God but wanted to be as God. (Jude 6) This one now enters the garden of Eden and uses the instrumentality of a serpent to tempt man to sin.

It is very instructive to analyze the mode of attack by Satan. Here we see the best diabolical mind at work. From his point of view he must not fail because it is a question whether or not another opportunity will ever be given him. He begins by asking a question. It sounds innocent enough. He asks whether indeed God has said that they may not eat of any of the trees of the garden. This can also be translated "all the trees" of the garden. Let Eve take it any way she wishes. Sow doubt and suspicion! He is asking about that which he knows. He is not seeking information. Let the woman now sort it out, and he will continue his attack according to her answer!

And, the woman answers. She answers a speaking serpent as though that is the most normal thing in the world. Instead of rebuking him and sending him out of her presence, she answers him according to his question. She informs him that they may indeed eat of the trees of the garden. God has not placed restrictions on them which would be difficult. No, He has given in overwhelming abundance. They, the first man and his wife, are living in perfect surroundings and lack nothing! The whole setting is unfavorable to Satan's temptations.

However, God has said more, says Eve. Although they may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden, God also said: "... of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden ... ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die." When these words are compared with 2:16-17 we see that there are important differences. Or is Eve giving a paraphrase of the actual words of God? She adds to the words and subtracts from them. God had not mentioned that they were not to touch this tree. Instead of saying "lest ye die" He had said: "thou shalt surely die." The seed which the evil one has sown is beginning to take root. If they may not even touch this tree the love relationship to their God is brought into question. Is He so good to them? By changing the wording of the penalty its certainty is questioned and only the possibility of such a penalty remains. She makes no mention of the name of the tree but only refers to its location. Satan could not have asked for more! Anyone who deals with the word of God in the way in which this woman has done is a candidate for destruction. Doubt and suspicion have surfaced very clearly and all subtlety can be abandoned!

The attack now becomes direct. Notice that Satan is able to quote the words which God spoke to Adam verbatim. The woman has softened the threat of penalty considerably, but Satan quotes the exact words. He now simply tells the woman that this

penalty will not go into effect. Mind you, he calls God a liar! God has said that they would surely die if they ate of the fruit of this tree and Satan says they will not die if they eat of it! The lines are drawn as sharply as possible. The doubt and suspicion which he had planted in the woman's mind make him bold because he sees victory is assured.

Not only is he so bold as to deny the truth of God's statement, he accuses Him of misleading man! According to Satan God knew that the eating of the fruit of this particular tree would be beneficial for man. Man's eyes would then be opened (but he doesn't say what they will see with these opened eyes) and he would then be as God knowing good and evil. Satan had sought to be as God and had failed. Man, though perfect, is not as God. No, he is dependent on God. Let him now eat of the fruit of this tree, and he will have full independence! This is the temptation for man. God has been placed in a very unfavorable light. His love to his God is undermined and his own, so-called, welfare is emphasized.

The Devil has spoken. He has made it clear as crystal that his hatred for God knows no bounds. He has denied God's truthfulness. He has denied God's goodness to man. He used a subtle beast of the field to approach the woman. Now he has unmasked himself.

What will be the reaction of the woman? Surely she will be offended at the attack made on her Maker! Surely she will say: Get behind me, Satan! This is the only kind of a reaction we could expect.

The reaction is, however, far different. The attack on the truthfulness and goodness of God is not even considered! Because this is not considered, the rest is understandable. She now looks at that tree and sees that it indeed appears to be good for food. That tree is beautiful—a delight to the eyes. In the context of the words of Satan, it could even be desired to make one wise. The lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the vain-glory of life are placed in the foreground. (I John 2:16) She takes of the fruit and eats! Satan has won the battle. God's truth is set aside. Disobedience enters the world of man.

She also gave to her husband, and he too ate of this fruit. Satan had approached the woman. Paul emphasizes the fact that man was created before the woman but that the woman was the first to fall into sin. (I Tim. 2:13-14) We are not told where Adam was when Satan approached the woman. Nor do we know if he was present in the latter part of the conversation. Only the important thing is mentioned—he, as well as the woman ate of the forbidden fruit.

The sin committed by our first parents was not a capital offense in the sense in which we speak of it today. It was not murder. The sin committed was the sin of disobedience. It was a denial of Divine authority. That is the root sin which is capable of producing all the other sins which this world has seen since that time. Here is disobedience to the clear word of God and a denial of His authority over their lives, and the next recorded sin is . . . murder!

The tempting promise of Satan was that their eyes would be opened—and now they are! The vague promise, without stating what the eyes would

be opened to see, was accepted as something desirable. Now their eyes are opened and they know that they are naked! Though they are the only two people in the world, they feel ashamed! The previous chapter closed with the statement that they were not ashamed of their nakedness before the fall. Now they are ashamed, and later they are ashamed of their nakedness before God. So they sew fig leaves together for a covering.

Satan's promises are immediately shown to be false. This is only the beginning of sorrows! How could man turn his back on the God of truth and love and listen to him who is the liar and the father of lies? But, how can man do that today when he has so much more experience of His love and faithfulness?

Man has fallen and only a miracle will restore him.

Questions for discussion:

- 1- How could the temptation to sin be real to a perfect person? Discuss.
- 2- What do we mean by original sin? Why does the first sin of our first parents affect all men, as their later sins do not?
- 3- How does this section teach that God is not the author of sin?
- 4- Is Satan's mode of attack instructive for us? Explain.
- 5- Why is the nakedness of man emphasized several times in the early chapters of Genesis—both in the state of rectitude and after the fall? ●

THE IMMEDIATE RESULTS OF THE FALL.

LESSON 6

GENESIS 3:8-24

God had warned man that in the day he would eat of the fruit of the forbidden tree he would surely die. (Gen. 2:17) Yet, this does not seem to be the case. Man has eaten of this fruit but Adam will live a total of 930 years. Has the unchanging God Whose Word shall always stand changed His mind? It is indeed true that man died spiritually when he fell into sin. However, his physical death was meant too when the warning was given. It seems to this writer that two things must be borne in mind to come to the proper interpretation of this matter: (1) the seed of death (physical) begins its work at the moment he falls; and (2) the grace of *time* is immediately given man.

What a sorry spectacle is revealed to us right after man has fallen! Instead of seeking communion with his God and rejoicing in it, he seeks to hide from the all-seeing eye of God. Evidently God had approached man "in the cool of the day" before this. Now when they notice the approach of God to them, they hide.

God calls out: Where art thou? The communion has been broken. The One now looks for the other.

Man cannot succeed in hiding himself and therefore answers. And—what an answer! He has hidden himself because he is ashamed of his nakedness. He does not dare to appear before the holy eye of God in his nakedness. He had not realized his nakedness before and was not ashamed. What has happened? God asks if he has eaten of the fruit of the forbidden tree. Only that act would have “opened his eyes” to his own nakedness.

The man’s reply to God’s question is factually correct. The woman gave him of this fruit and he ate. However, his answer is also full of insinuations. He does not accept full responsibility for the act. He accuses the woman with whom he is one flesh. He also implicates God Who gave him this woman. The woman follows the man’s example in part. She too does not accept full blame but blames the serpent.

God does not ask the serpent why he has done this because in the serpent He is not dealing with a responsible moral creature. The curse is pronounced on the serpent. This curse will distinguish the serpent among all the beasts in that his locomotion shall be on his belly. Because of this form of movement he will eat the dust of the ground. We do not know how the serpent moved about before but it is evident that a change came about because he had been used to tempt man to sin.

The 15th verse of this chapter has usually been singled out as one of the most important statements in the Old Testament. And indeed it is. These words have been called “the mother promise.” It is the mother of all promises. Here, in the middle of the catalog of woes which are to come on man and on the creation, we hear the first mention of grace. Notice the instructive form in which it comes. God will put enmity between the serpent and the woman and between their descendents. When there was friendship between the two the worst possible event took place. That friendship was destructive to man. In His care of the human race God will now set the two at enmity toward each other. Man must maintain that enmity because friendship in this relationship will only hurt him more. It is, therefore, first of all an enmity between men and serpents. That is the clear teaching of the text. It is an enmity which will continue throughout the ages, but the outcome is not left in doubt. The serpent will bite the heel of man but man will crush the head of the serpent. The words are spoken to the serpent. Reference is made to the woman and her seed. The victory, however, is ascribed to one person—“he shall bruise thy head”—and the damage is done to one—“thou shalt bruise his heel.” Here is a definite reference to a Savior to come from the seed of the woman. Here is the first glimmering of light in the midst of this dismal situation. God’s grace, unasked for, immediately makes its appearance. Man will have to wait a long time for this “Conqueror” to appear, but, appear He will!

The curse pronounced upon the serpent is devastating. He will be destroyed. The judgment which falls on the woman and the man is severe—but it does not end in destruction. First God addresses the woman. The judgment which falls on her is centered

on the increase of pain she will experience in bringing children into this world. When the man and woman had been created He commanded them to be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth. The coming of children was to be an unmixed blessing. Now, after the fall, she will bring them forth with intense pain. Will she then simply decide not to have children and thereby escape this pain? No, the Lord has given His command to be fruitful and to multiply, and that command will stand. “Thy desire shall be to thy husband.” Her in-created desire will cause her to bear children even though this will cause her great pain. The husband shall also rule over her. She had been made for man as his helper. Since creation the man was the head of the woman. This was not a relationship in which to one would lord it over the other but simply the divine order. Now things have changed. He will rule over her. Where the word of God did not come among men, the woman virtually became the slave of man. Sin disrupted all human relationships.

Now the Lord pronounces sentence upon the man. The judgment which falls on him centers about his ability to provide for the physical needs of both himself and those who are dependent on him. It deals with his work. The ground is going to be cursed for his sake. As the crown of all creation he has dragged nature down with him when he fell. The ground brought forth in abundance in the garden of Eden. He was called to tend the garden but the tending wasn’t “toil.” He could find his full enjoyment in the assignment his God had given him. He will now indeed eat of the produce of the ground but it will demand his “toil.” Not only will the ground yield the fruit of what he has planted but it will also bring forth thorns and thistles. It will produce, of itself, what he cannot use and these thorns and thistles will hinder that which he has planted for food. Mention had only been made of the fruit of trees as man’s food prior to this but now the herb of the field is mentioned as his food. Man must till the soil and plant and wrest his livelihood from the ground. It will take hard labor. In all his work to make a living he will be reminded of the sin he has committed. He will have to work hard as long as he lives to keep body and soul together. This will take so much of his time that little time will be left for his spiritual needs. And what will be the end of the matter? After life-long hard labor he will return to the ground! He was taken from the dust of the earth and shall return to the dust. What a sad ending for this jewel—this crown—of creation! Your eyes shall be opened! This is no allegory—this is history—these are the stark facts!

So far reference has only been made to his partner as “the woman” but the man, Adam, now gives her a proper name. She is called Eve, derived from the word “life,” because she is to be the mother of all men. The marriage bond has received two severe blows. The man accused his wife of responsibility for the fall and a part of the curse was that the husband would rule over his wife. Amid these difficulties they must now continue and become the parents of the human race.

To clothe their nakedness the Lord now gives them more substantial covering. Coats of animal skins are now given them thereby also making it clear that the life of animals may be taken for the benefit of man.

The closing verses of this chapter present some difficulties in interpretation and have, consequently, been interpreted in various ways. What does the Lord mean when He says: Behold the man is become as one of us (as God), to know good and evil; and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever . . .? Is this irony? Was Satan right when he told man that the eating of the forbidden tree would give him this knowledge? Certainly it was not the knowledge which would help man. But, he does have experiential knowledge of evil now. He had apparently not eaten of the fruit of the tree of life. These two trees stood as opposites over against each other. Man was allowed to eat of the tree of life—and he should have done so. Instead, he eats of the forbidden tree. The one would give life—the other gave death. After he has eaten of the forbidden tree and has suffered the consequences, he must not be allowed to eat of the tree of life. The eating of the one rules out the eating of the other. Unending life under the curse of sin would be unbearable.

To prevent his eating of the tree of life God "drives" man out of the garden of Eden. The place which He Himself had formed for man, the place of unparalleled beauty, the place where man had direct communion with his Maker, is no longer to be his home. He is sent out into a hostile environment. The curse pronounced on him goes into effect at once. Eden lies behind him and the future looks dark.

Not only is man driven from his first home but the Lord also reveals that there is no turning back. He places angels, Cherubim, at the east of the garden of Eden to prevent man's return. They are armed with "the flame of a sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life." No one shall break through this guard and this garden has not been found to the present day.

God has given hope to man (vs. 15) but this hope will not be realized in a return to the garden of Eden. Man will have to be instructed by his God concerning a new way of atonement and life.

Questions for discussion:

- 1- Did man die as soon as he fell into sin? In what sense? Explain.
- 2- Guilt drives away from God—e.g.—Adam and Eve hiding. What does this teach us concerning unconfessed sins? Discuss.
- 3- Do you think our first parents understood vs. 15 as a ray of hope? If they did, do you think they realized it would take so long to be fulfilled? Why did it take so long?
- 4- Why does the sentence on the woman center about child-bearing and the sentence on the man about his work? Which is the more severe?
- 5- Would endless life be a blessing or a disaster in man's present state? ●

As to Being Reformed — What's it all about?

John Vander Ploeg

Twenty-three years ago, the late R. B. Kuiper wrote a significant book entitled *As to Being Reformed*. Obviously, I am indebted to him for the first part of the title above these lines. If the need for calling attention to our Reformed heritage was urgent in R. B.'s day, today that urgency has become nothing less than acute.

The CRC is by no means alone in claiming by its name to be Reformed. To mention but a few, there are the Reformed Church in America, Protestant Reformed, American Reformed, Netherlands Reformed, Hungarian Reformed. Now just what is that being *Reformed* all about? Unless we are serious about really being *Reformed*, it's high time that we become honest and change our name.

The subject is apropos for this month because October is when we commemorate the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century. Halloween with its hobgoblins and tomfoolery is a great occasion for our youngsters whereas Reformation Day meetings, with precious few exceptions, have somewhere been dropped along the way. To call ourselves sons and daughters of the Protestant Reformation is a sham if we and our children no longer become even the least bit excited about the great works God used Calvin, Luther, and others to achieve.

Nothing but a name — During this writer's pastorate at Lansing, Illinois, an amusing incident occurred when one year we were hosting an annual convention of the Federation of Reformed Young Women's Societies headed by the late Miss Johanna Timmer as president. How we chuckled to learn that a Chicago newspaper reporter had appeared on the scene and innocently inquired whether all these hun-

dreds of girls were from some Reform School. You may be sure if Miss Timmer had been asked, the reporter would have been set straight in short order and in no uncertain terms. How many of the young lady conventioners would have been able to explain the *Reformed* part of their name is anybody's guess. Maybe a friend of mine is correct when he says of our CRC people that no others have been taught so much and have learned so little.

Maybe that newspaper reporter's ignorance about the meaning of Reformed was a reflection, not so much on him, but rather on us who had communicated to him so poorly or possibly not at all. And certainly that was nothing to chuckle about.

A far greater tragedy would be that we who so readily call ourselves *Reformed* may only know that name as a tag for identification without being able to speak knowingly and clearly about our heritage of faith to which this name refers.

What is there about the truly *Reformed* person that makes him tick? Unless we know this, our Reformed clock will be stock-still and we will be unable to tell our generation what time it is in the great ongoing program of our Lord and King. Unless we who call ourselves *Reformed* care and are courageous enough to really be ourselves, we will have no contribution to make to our world and generation for which everything has gone awry. If we really mean what we say and say what we mean, this challenge will not fall on deaf ears:

"Be yourself, said someone,
But he could not, for he was no one."

When those renegade sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, presumed to carry the ark of the covenant of Jehovah into battle with the Philistines the outcome for Israel was infamy and disaster. Even so today, shame and defeat will be the lot of those who call themselves *Reformed* if in reality their profession is nothing more than "sounding brass, or a clanging cymbal."

The gist of it — As to being Reformed — briefly and precisely, what does it mean? Someone conversant with the German might ask, what is this *ding an sich* (thing in itself)?

The answer, I venture to suggest, is that the truly *Reformed* person is one for whom all of faith and life must be totally theocentric or God-centered.

Like a brilliant diamond, the Reformed faith is resplendent with many facets of truth that become increasingly precious to those who have learned to know and love and live it. In the last analysis, Paul's doxology in Romans 11:36 is the epitome of it all: "For of him, and through him, and unto him, are all things. To him be the glory for ever. Amen."

As someone once observed about another, it may indeed be said of that great Reformer, John Calvin, that he was "a God-intoxicated man." The motto on Calvin's seal was, "My heart I offer to Thee, Lord . . . promptly and sincerely."

Well-known as a student of Calvin, Dounmergue wrote of him: "Reassured, justified, the Reformer of Geneva may lay himself into an unknown grave which no stone will ever reveal to the eye of man.

For brightly shines the only epitaph which he might have desired, the humble, triumphant epitaph: 'SOLI DEO GLORIA.'

Coram Deo was the secret of John Calvin's genius both as a theologian and as an ethicist, as a teacher of truth versus the lie and of good versus evil. Always giving God the preeminence was for Calvin the governing principle for all of life, the lodestar by which he charted his course, and always the point of reference for him, so that Beza could say of Calvin: "It has pleased God to show us in the life of a single man of our time how to live and how to die."

The Bible is usually thought to be a Christ-centered book. But, because Christ is God, and also due to further consideration, the Bible may better be said to be a God-centered book. At the very outset the Bible tells us, "In the beginning *God* . . ." And in Revelation 22, before the canon is closed, we are told, "Worship God."

We learn from the Bible that it is the Word of God, that man was created by *God*, he fell into sin by disobeying the commandment of *God*, light pierced the darkness of his condemnation when he received the mother-promise or evangelium from God, the Christ of God came to restore man to *God*, and man has been redeemed, not first of all for his own sake, but rather that he may live forever for the glory of *God*.

The angels, in their song at Christ's birth, had their theology in the proper perspective and taught us to do likewise when at Bethlehem they began with, "Glory to *God* in the highest!" Their dominant motif was *Gloria in excelsis Deo!* In its origin, implementation, and purpose, redemption is not man-centered by God-centered. And therefore anyone who is truly Reformed will fit into, or be fitted into, this glorious scheme by putting first things first and recognizing and adoring his Lord as the Alpha and the Omega, as the First and the Last. His whole life is a prostration before Him as he exclaims, "My God, how wonderful Thou art!"

What we are witnessing and also caught up in today is an age-old battle, the intensity of which the world may never have known before. It may be called *the battle of the isms*. The issue at stake is always the same: What governing principle or point of reference are we to adopt and also promote as the be-all and the end-all of life? The battle is long and fierce; and for all, without exception, the outcome will determine our life's course and also our eternal destiny.

Contemporary Communism has its answer: a totalitarian state is its be-all and end-all for all of life. Communism is actually a false religion.

Traditional Roman Catholicism (it is difficult to assess the extent to which Modern Catholicism has actually changed the church) regarded the Church as its governing point of reference. Wrong as he was at times, Barth was not wrong when he once observed that the difference between us Protestants and Roman Catholics is that little word *and*. They want faith *and* works, the Bible *and* tradition, Jesus Christ *and* Mary — and that is a difference that really runs deep.

Secularism — a foe far more subtle, seductive, and destructive than either of those above — adopts this world or age as the measure of all things and makes conformity to it to be its pursuit by day and by night. The extent of the toll taken by the secularizing influence of television, also among us who call ourselves Reformed, is something we have not yet begun to measure, a widespread spiritual damage too fearful to contemplate. Whereas the heresy of Roman Catholicism may have been enemy number one for Protestants once upon a time, as a threat to our survival, it surely takes a back seat compared to the forces of secularism that mesmerize young and old today unto their eternal ruin.

There are also other isms that continue to claim their hapless victims. For Humanism man is the measure of all things. The governing principle for today's prevailing Hedonism is the love of pleasure. Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die. Materialism has committed itself to the acquisition and enjoyment of earthly possessions as its lifelong point of reference — things that are here today and gone tomorrow.

Drawn up in battle array, on the side of Satan, are all those who march to a different drumbeat than those who are energized and motivated by their deep conviction that the only life worth living is the life in and for their Lord of whom, through whom, and unto whom are all things.

"To him be the glory for ever. Amen."

To be sure, this is the genius of true Christianity, and that is what it means to be truly Reformed.

The Reformed hallmark — Here then is the test to know what is truly Reformed in faith and in life. Is it God-centered? Does it ring true *Coram Deo* (before the face of the Lord)? Is it in keeping with Paul's sublime utterance or doxology in Roman's 11: 36: "For of him, and through him, and unto him, are all things. To him be the glory for ever. Amen."

This is the test for both *Reformed orthodoxy* and for *Reformed orthopraxy*, sound doctrine and proper practice.

Our doctrine is orthodox or sound only when it revolves about God even as our earth and the other heavenly bodies revolve about the sun. Holding to the Ptolemaic view of the universe with the earth at the center, man's conception was badly out of line until the Polish astronomer, Nicolaus Copernicus, a contemporary of John Calvin, came along and set it straight.

What Copernicus did for astronomy in his day by teaching men that the sun is the true center of our solar system, John Calvin did for theology or Christian doctrine in making God the center, the measure, and the supreme determinant of it all.

Reformed orthodoxy professes and propagates the doctrine of sovereign predestination without yielding to those who are determined to discard reprobation as some among us are now attempting to do. Basically, the question is whether or not we are willing to let God be God.

In Reformed orthodoxy the Bible is accorded its rightful place as the Word of God. To be sure, God did use fallible and errant authors to write His in-

fallible and inerrant Word. However, when we allow the new hermeneutic to make plain and straightforward statements of Scripture time-conditioned and no longer valid for us today, then God is no longer allowed to be God.

To quote Calvin: "Hence the Scriptures obtain full authority among believers only when men regard them as having sprung from heaven, as if there the living words of God were heard."

In an outstanding article in the April '79 *Calvin Theological Journal* on "The Uniqueness of Reformed Theology," Dr. Fred Klooster holds that its governing principle is always *sola, tota Scriptura* (the Bible only and the whole Bible).

Because Reformed orthodoxy is God-centered, it cannot for a moment countenance the soul-destroying theory of evolution as it seeks to usurp the place of the Scriptural doctrine of divine creation. Arminianism, Liberalism, Humanism, Scientism, Communism and the other unscriptural isms must be rejected because they all shift the center of gravity from God to something or someone else that is not God. The hallmark or touchstone for Reformed orthodoxy is that it must always begin and end with God at the center.

It is of the utmost importance to add that *Reformed orthopraxy* must always accompany Reformed orthodoxy like the two sides of one and the same coin. Doctrine without life is an empty show and a sham.

That the demons are orthodox in their theology is obvious from James 1:19: "Thou believest that God is one; thou doest well; the demons also believe and shudder." And the demons are orthodox also in their Christology. We find in Luke 4:41: "And demons also came out from many, crying out, and saying, Thou art the Son of God. And rebuking them, he suffered them not to speak, because they knew that he was the Christ." But, notwithstanding all their orthodoxy, the demons are for ever damned.

Orthopraxy, or godly conduct, is essential because "faith without works is dead." As long as we keep God and His Word clearly in focus, our many vexing questions about right and wrong do not go begging for an answer. However simplistic and naive this may appear to some sophisticated ones among us, the solution to all our ethical problems is basically still the same as ever — *God-centered living*. Joseph taught us that when he refused to be seduced by Potiphar's adulterous wife by saying: "How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" Our sinless Savior taught the secret or orthopraxy in holding on for dear life to His God and His Word when He rebuffed Satan with His "It is written."

Today's staggering divorce rate, broken marriages, obsession with unbridled sex, abortion, homosexuality, alcohol addiction, and allowing the devil to dupe us into thinking that all this is the life — those who are marked by Reformed *orthopraxy* may remain true and be "more than conquerors" even over all this by always living "near unto God," and by having only one purpose in life: *Soli Deo gloria!*"

THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST

THE OFFICES OF CHRIST

Jerome M. Julien

It was the Sabbath Day and as was the custom of the citizens at Nazareth, fathers, mothers, boys and girls made their way to the synagogue. But unknown to them at the time, this Sabbath was to be a special day. It was to be a day for which the ancestors of those making their way to the synagogue longed. This Sabbath the Messiah, the promised Christ, would break open in their hearing the beautiful Old Testament truth concerning Himself.

Jesus, the son of Mary, had returned home. Now a successful teacher (Luke 4:14, 15), He was asked to speak. Standing, He read Isaiah 61, which said that after the Babylonish captivity there would be still another witness to God's grace. It would be the evidence to which all other evidences pointed: the Christ. It said that He alone would be endued with the Holy Spirit and because of this He alone could perform and grant all the promised benefits.

When Jesus had finished reading, He sat down and taught: "This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears" (Luke 4:21).

Jesus was saying that He is the Messiah—the Christ, the Promised One of God.

To call Jesus the Messiah or Christ is to use a term which has to do with anointing with oil.

Anointing with oil was commonly done in Old Testament times as a sign of friendship. Guests were anointed with oil. It was also used on the face for the purpose of beautifying and for health purposes.

For the Hebrews it also had a deeper meaning: one form of it had a profound religious symbolism (I Samuel 16:13). An especially prepared oil was used. It was fragrant, glittering and very expensive. When used in the consecration of a man to a special task or office, through it God was saying that this man was being set apart for a special task and that the Holy Spirit would be given him so that he could perform the task.

This anointing was done to men entering upon three and only three offices. It was done to prophets (Elisha), to priests (Aaron and his successors), to kings (David). Receiving this anointing they were set apart for their particular God-given tasks and shown that they were given power by the Holy Spirit to act.

When Christ says "the Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he anointed me to preach . . ." He is saying that all these Old Testament offices pointed to

His coming and were fulfilled in Him. This was God's plan from eternity (Psalm 2:2, 6; 45:7, 8; 89:20, 21).

While there is no record of Christ actually being anointed ceremonially with oil, He was anointed by the Holy Spirit. This was beautifully shown at His baptism (Matthew 3:13-17). Because of this anointing He was given power by God to do what I could not do (Acts 10:38).

"Office" may be explained as "God-given assignment." One in office does not act on his own initiative but fulfills a commission. And in this case it is a commission given by the Sovereign God. In general, the assignment God gave to the Second Person of the Trinity, and thus to Christ, is to serve Him in the friendship of the covenant so that He would act as our Substitute.

As our Substitute Christ functions as God's servant. He is always stating by word and action, "Lo, I am come to do Thy will." His calling is to know *and* to do what God has demanded. His calling is to love God with a true, full and complete love. His calling is to function not on His own behalf but as the servant of the living God.

These functions or offices of Christ are called prophet, priest and king. While these offices are often referred to as the Triple Office, they are in reality all part of the one office given to Him by the Sovereign God. These three functions correspond to the three aspects of man: his knowing, his willing and his doing.

You recall, of course, that Adam's sin brought total corruption and death to all men. Previous to the Fall, man being in the image of God, knew God and His will. With his head he served God. Having such knowledge he could give names to every living creature (Genesis 2:19, 20). But this beautiful life came to an end with the Fall. Through the Fall man's mind was darkened (Ephesians 4:18) and subjected to spiritual ignorance (I Corinthians 2:14). The result was that no longer did man know and praise God.

It was necessary, therefore, that Christ come as our Vicarious, or Substitutionary, Prophet, or as the *Heidelberg Catechism* puts it: "our chief Prophet and Teacher" (q. 31). As servant of God He knew and praised God in harmony with God's Law (John 17:4, 6)—something we could not and would not do on account of sin.

Second, Adam's status as priest was changed through the Fall. In the image of God he had been made in righteousness. With his heart he was receptive to the love of God. Does not the fact that Adam hid himself from God after the Fall (Genesis 3:8) imply that his heart had been receptive to God's love?

The Fall brought a change to this beautiful relationship. Man's will is now perverted—he no longer serves God (John 8:44). Instead, with his will he hates God and serves the Devil (II Timothy 2:25, 26).

Thus, if we are to know redemption, Christ had to come as our Vicarious Priest, or as the *Heidelberg Catechism* calls Him, "our only High Priest" (q. 31). He had to do what we would not and could not do. Again, He had to perfectly will to do God's will (Psalm 40:7, 8). To do this He had to make a perfect sacrifice for us (Hebrews 9) and through it all He had to be obedient in His suffering (Philippians 2:8; Hebrews 5:8).

Third, Adam was created in God's image and thus as king. That is, he was created in true holiness. We see his whole-hearted service working out as he named the animals in the Garden (Genesis 2:19, 20). He ruled in creation but not for *his* glory. He ruled for the honor of *the King of Kings*.

This all was changed, however, through the Fall. With sin came the enslavement of his life (John 8:34; Romans 6:20; Titus 3:3). The result of this, of course, is that God's creation is used by sinful man for the glory of man (Romans 3:12).

Christ, as the Servant of God, is "our eternal King" (*Heidelberg Catechism*, q. 31). By His work He has vanquished both His and our foe (I Corinthians

15:25). In so doing, He has snatched us out of Satan's hands.

Because He is THE CHRIST, the Anointed One of God, we for whom this God-given task was performed can bear the name Christian.

In Christ we are prophets, priests and kings.

As a prophet I am a confessor of His name (Romans 10:10; Matthew 10:32).

This means two things: First, I want to know God's will. I pray, "Teach me, O Lord, Thy way of Truth, that from it I might not depart." As a Christian I love His Word. I want to study it—and I do. I want to hear it preached—and I do. Second, to be a prophet unto God means that I speak in accord with God's revelation. I rejoice in telling of God's grace.

As priest I live in love for God. Whole-heartedly I present myself as a sacrifice of thankfulness to God (Romans 12:1; I Peter 2:9). My testimony is that of David: "I love thee, O Jehovah, my strength" (Psalm 18:1). This love streams through my heart.

As king I serve the Lord. Not only do I know in my head God's will, not only do I love God in my heart, I also walk before the Lord in life. I rule in His name in this life. I fight against sin and the devil (Romans 6:12, 13) and from Him I receive the power to so live (Philippians 2:12, 13).

Is it any wonder that John Newton, the converted slave-trader, having come by grace to know the wonder of the Savior, would write so we could sing:

Jesus, my Shepherd, Guardian, Friend!

My Prophet, Priest, and King!

My Lord, my Life, my Way, my End!

Accept the praise I bring.

Meditation

REMEMBERING YOUR LEADERS

John Blankespoor

Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith. Heb. 13:7.

Remember.

It is such a big word. Actually we remember much less than ten percent of what we have learned. The Lord Jesus when on earth possibly had a perfect memory. What an accumulation of knowledge that would give us. And hopefully wisdom. Remembering of course implies learning. When once we have learned something, we can remember it or forget it. And we forget so much. I recall so well a pious elder once telling me that he was trying to make a general count of all the sermons he had heard, then being

seventy years old. Not only that, but how much he remembered of them, or better said, how little he remembered of them.

The Scriptures frequently speak of remembering something.

In Ecclesiastes young people are warned to remember their Creator. The Israelites must remember and not forget the mighty works of the Lord in their deliverance. Isaiah later rebukes the people of Israel because they have forgotten the faithful Lord who saved them through their leaders. Here in Hebrews we are also told to remember our leaders.

Why must these people remember these leaders who brought to them the Word of God? These He-

brew Christians were weakening in their Christian confession and living. Therefore they must recall and constantly bring to mind how their leaders of the past brought to them the Word of God, and how they themselves had lived according to that Word and also sacrificed for it. Who these leaders were specifically we do not know. Neither is that necessary. But such leaders they did have. The Church of Christ has had tens of thousands of leaders who have been engaged in this great work of bringing the Word in one form or another.

In this month of October we remember in a special way the great Protestant Reformation of the 16th century. There were many great men raised up by God over a period of time, Luther, Calvin, Knox, Zwingli, Huss and many others.

And what was the heart of all their criticism of the Roman Catholic Church, and positively the one truth they taught, set forth, defended and even sacrificed their lives for? That man and centrally, of course, the church needs the infallibly inspired Word of God. The heart of the Reformation was the return of the Word of God to the church. And God used these men to give to the people this great precious Word. And when the writer to the Hebrews speaks of remembering our leaders, and when we apply it to this season of the year it surely means that we remember these great leaders of the Reformation.

This means that in this season a special effort is put forth, from the pulpit, with Christian literature and in other ways to remind people what the Lord did through these men to give us the precious Word. And for the laity it surely means that special effort is put forth in this age of lethargy and lukewarmness to learn what these men did, taught and what they gave the church.

No doubt this can be applied also to a larger circle of people. I have in mind pastors, elders, teachers, parents, grandparents and others. Most of us who were born and raised in the covenant have had many such leaders. Many of us have had or do have pious parents whose prayer and desire it was to bring to their children the Word of God that they might walk in His ways. Many, too, have had conscientious Christian school teachers who made indelible impressions on us with their instruction and godliness. There were the pastors of course, perhaps elders or others who taught catechism and Sunday School. Often we hear of older people speaking of what they have learned or remember of certain pastor(s) in times past. Certain things they said and taught "stuck" with them, in sermons and teachings. This is beautiful.

During the Reformation season, in the light of this text, God wants us to put forth a special effort to remember them, and what they taught us. Personally I will never forget what a few outstanding godly Christian School teachers taught me and the examples they gave. Also certain pious pastors and elders. Remember them . . .

But doctrine and life cannot be separated.

In this text we also read of the outcome of their way of life. This expression is not easy to explain.

Quite probably it must be explained in connection with the weaknesses of the Hebrew Christians. They needed more patience, steadfastness and perseverance in their Christian walk. And that is exactly what these leaders who brought them the Word possessed. In other words they lived what they taught, unto the very end. Pillars they were, also when sacrifices had to be made. And so in this period of the Reformation, remember these leaders, not only with what they taught, but how they were diligent, made sacrifices and were zealous for the cause of the Lord. Remember what intense struggles Luther experienced in coming to the great truth of justification by faith alone. Bring to mind the sacrifice of a man like Calvin, in persecution, with much opposition, with hardly a healthy day in his life, working and toiling to bring to the people the Word of God. One can go on like that. I also think of Guido de Bres, who, having written the beautiful Netherlands Confession, soon afterwards lost his life because of it. And all this that we might have this explanation of the Word of God even in the 20th century.

So sad it is that the church today knows so little about these men and what they gave us. Remember these leaders and how they died in this faith. Also call to mind repeatedly what dedicated and faithful ministers of the Word have brought to you from the pulpit and in other ways. Stop to think of some outstanding things they have taught you, and left with you. And by all means don't forget those godly parents, what they taught, what examples they gave, and how they sacrificed for you. All to bring you the Word. All this gives courage and fortitude. Don't forget them!

"Imitate their faith"

Surely that is the purpose.

Tremendous words these are for us in this age of pragmatism and materialism.

Generally there is such little interest in knowledge and learning. The result is appalling ignorance of the many important truths of the Reformation, what it was all about as well as many basic truths of Reformed faith and even the Bible itself. Following our leaders and imitating them surely implies that we are diligent in the use of the Word, be faithful with our children in giving them a Christian education and in diligent use of the means of grace in church.

Remember those leaders when you read of their zeal and devotion. Remember them, as some or even many of them pined away in persecution, dungeons and were even burned at the stake. Think of them when you are called upon to make just a few minor sacrifices, compared with them. And ask yourself, how much am I living like those who were so dedicated to the Lord, with that as their priority in life.

May we be true sons and daughters of the Reformation in this age of prosperity and spiritual complacency! Remember those leaders, as people of God. And the Lord will bless us and our children. ●

FAMILY PLANNING (I)

Laurie Vanden Heuvel

Family planning has become an American "way of life." Doctors urge it in post-delivery visits. Marriage license forms are accompanied by inserts from the Family Planning Commission instructing future husbands and wives on ways and means of *restricting* and *spacing* their families. Sterilization procedures are urged for both sexes should the progeny from a marriage become too numerous (exceeding two children!). Rising costs of living and the pressures of advertising have convinced even many Christians that children are a *burden*, not to be multiplied. Some speak freely of "unplanned children" and refer to them as "accidents."

But our heavenly Father has called children a "heritage" of the Lord, a "reward." He has quite a different "family plan." He has planned that "out of the mouths of babes and sucklings" He will *gather praise* for Himself (Psalm 8). He has given these little ones *position* — a "little lower than angels . . . crowned with glory and honor" (Psalm 8). He has given these little ones *power* — to have "dominion over the works of God's hands" (Psalm 8) — power over soil, over steel, over electricity, over minds, over social relationships and over all the vast potential which is encompassed on this ball called earth. He has given these little ones a *purpose*, that "all things may be *put under* their feet, that all of nature

may *yield* to the control of these children so that *their Father in heaven may receive the glory.*" What a pity that so much of the power in today's world is in the hands of Satan's followers, that so much of the potential is yielding to their control. This ought not so to be. God's plan calls for children to be born to Christians. He has given them a two-fold task to do.

- 1.) Negatively, these children are to *break the power of evil*. Psalm 8:2 says: "From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise . . . to *silence the foe* and the avenger" (NIV).
- 2.) Positively, these children are to *build the Kingdom*.

For this task they must be prepared. Christian education becomes a vital and indispensable tool in the building of God's Kingdom in this world. Christian education in the home, church and school must serve as the *plumbline* by which children grow up straight and tall spiritually, academically and socially according to God's Word. No carpenter builds a house without using a plumb to insure straight walls. No gardener plants a tree without tying it to a vertical post to insure a straight tree. So, too no Christian parent should launch a child into life without affixing that child to the *plumb* of God's Word at home, at school and at church.

For the next few months we are going to look closely at "family planning" — God's way. ●

The new address of Mrs. Vanden Heuvel, the editor of this department, is 207 Kansas Ave., N.W., Orange City, Iowa 51041.



REACTIONS TO THE SYNOD

The Verhey Case

Dr. Verhey, a minister of the Christian Reformed Church who teaches at Hope col-

lege in Holland, Mich., questions the speaking of the serpent in Gen. 3 and the reality of the earthquake in Matt. 28:2. Synod was asked to make a final decision of this matter this year. But Synod's action was disappointing, for it did not speak clearly on the matter. Instead, it gave Verhey a mild warning, and told him to keep discussing the matter with his consistory (Nelard Ave. in Grand Rapids). But this consistory has defended Verhey from the very beginning, so this advice is like asking the coyote to guard the chicken coop, as one delegate put it.

The question I have is this: If one denies the factuality of the first part of Matt. 28:2 (the earthquake), what's going to stop someone else (on the very same literary and hermeneutical basis) from denying the reality of the second part (the angel and the stone)? And what's going to stop someone else from going one step further (as Bultmann has done) to denying the actual resurrection of Christ?

The plain answer to this question is, notwithstanding all kinds of nice pious talk: Nothing! And the history of the Geref.

Kerken in the Netherlands ought to teach us a lesson here. Prof. Kuitert already denies the existence of Adam and Eve, and has about a dozen interpretations of the resurrection, from which we may choose one, according to him. That's exactly where this kind of thinking leads us. Our children have no trouble believing these miraculous events in the Bible. And Jesus says that we must all become like children in our approach to God's Word. Too bad that we no longer have the courage of our convictions. Too bad Synod did not have the courage and integrity to speak out unequivocally on such a crucial issue. It's time we wake up.

Promoting Women Deacons

In conversation with some of my colleagues about the Agenda of the 1979 Synod, more than one expressed disappointment at the number of overtures/appeals dealing with the matter of women in the diaconal office. Their reasoning was: What a lot of time and energy is wasted on such a relatively minor matter, "while the

world is burning." We have so many more important issues to discuss.

Now in one way I agree with them. The matter of women-deacons in itself is not that important an issue, even though I believe it is part of a bigger picture — having to do with our view of Scripture in the first place, and paving the way for women in all the special offices in the second place.

But the point I want to make right now is this: What's sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander too. In other words, if it's a waste of time *protesting* this trend, then it was also a waste of time *proposing* it in the first place. But that is what my colleagues are not so ready to admit. To advocate these matters is a matter of "progress" in the church. To resist them is a waste of time. But that type of reasoning I don't buy for a moment.

If we're really so concerned about the big issues in church and world, (secularism, worldliness, apathy, etc.) then let's get busy and do something about them. And stop wasting our time on matters which don't affect these issues at all, and which needlessly divide the army of the Lord. However, the zeal and determination with which some advocate women in (eccles.) office makes it appear that this is suddenly going to put the church into gear and into action. Then we can really make headway. But woe to those who stall time by trying to hold it back.

The crux of the matter is, of course, that if we'd stop allowing the world to write (part of) the agenda of the church in the first place, we'd be way ahead of the game. But the church likes to swing with every new fad that comes along in society — and then try to baptize it with "Christian principles." But it is a vain undertaking. And the church's relevance in society becomes more questionable all the time. We would be much better off if we were not so enamoured by the spirit (Spirit = idol) of the age, but more governed by the Spirit which is from above.

Following Fads

In a recent article in the Dutch magazine *Koers*, Drs. J. Klatter wrote an article entitled "Watch Out for the Desire for the (latest) Fashion & Keep Your Eye on the Pendulum." In this article he mentions the strong impulse toward "emancipation" and "freedom" today in our society. One result is the Women's Liberation movement. To be sure, says Klatter, a correction was needed in our attitude toward women, particularly when we remember that during the Middle Ages a discussion could be held as to whether a woman was really human. Even in Christian circles a woman/wife was seen too much as a slave or underdog of the man/husband.

But now the pendulum has swung in the opposite direction, and the drive for egalitarianism wants to wipe out all distinctions between man and woman. Everything that reminds us of the essential, creational differences between man and woman must be wiped out and offered on the altar of egalitarianism. Such talk Klatter calls "passionate prattle." The correction has become a defect.

From the world we can expect such "prattle" and such pendulum-swinging

fads. But it's a sad business when the church thinks she has to get into the swing of things too, in order to be "relevant." We've had enough of such faddishness in the CRC of late.

JELLE TUININGA
Smithers, B.C.

Dear Editor:

I want to set the record straight. Contrary to Mr. Peter De Jong's statements in the July issue of *The Outlook* ("Marxist Influences in Education"), I *am* and always have been in favor of structured, orderly, and disciplined learning situations in the classroom. A school exists for structured learning activities, and in my position as a Christian school teacher, principal, and education coordinator I have always advocated well-planned, goal-directed, and thoroughly Christian units and courses.

My point in the article in question in the *Christian Educators Journal* was that many of our Christian college graduates do not know how to structure the classroom effectively for the multi-grade situations that are prevalent in our province. Such a situation calls for effective grouping, including the use of work stations — but with more structure and discipline than is normally required in a classroom. It seems to me that in doing so, however, to show love and concern for God's covenant children, to lead them to self-discipline wherever possible, to meet their individual needs, and to allow them to develop their God-given creative talents is neither "Marxist" nor unReformed.

For readers interested in my views on education, I refer them to *Shaping School Curriculum: A Biblical View* (Signal Publishing, Terre Haute) or to my recent series of articles in *Renewal*, *Does Reformed Christian Education Have a Future?* A careful reading of these — or of my essay in *To Prod the "Slumbering Giant"* — will convince readers, I am sure, that there is no danger that I am causing "Marxist or other anti-Christian affinities" to be at work in our Christian schools.

Sincerely yours,
HARRO VAN BRUMMELEN
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EDITOR'S NOTE

The point of the article which I translated was not that a large part of the leadership in the schools has become Marxist, but that Marxist propaganda and influence have been so continuous and prolonged in modern society in general and in the school systems in particular that many people who wouldn't dream of being Marxists adopt some of their clichés as self-evident assumptions on which they base their own views. And some even labor to devise "Christian" arguments to support these views.

I alluded to the exchange in the *Christian Educators Journal* as a recent striking example of the way in which a "structured, orderly, disciplined traditional classroom procedure was criticized in favor of an "informal, relaxed, open, less-structured ar-

rangement adapted to the child's individual 'needs' and 'creativity' " — the kind of stress which Dr. Troost described as one characteristic of the Marxist influence.

Mr. Harro Van Brummelen's reply (I regret the misspelling of his first name in the *OUTLOOK*) expresses a markedly different emphasis from that in his *Journal* article. His letter sounds more like Mr. Vanden Bosch's criticism of his viewpoint in that *Journal*. If he has more reservations about the revolt against established authority and order which characterizes the Marxist movement and the temper of our times than his other writings would lead one to expect, so much the better.



VAN TIL — DEFENDER OF THE FAITH by William White, Jr. 233 pages. Thomas Nelson Publishers; \$4.95.

Author White says of Dr. Cornelius Van Til: "He has been praised, condemned, quoted, misquoted, represented, misrepresented, understood, misunderstood, loved, hated, explored, ignored. Above the lightning, thunder, wind and hail he has stood his ground coolly and calmly; inflexible in his stance . . ."

THE CONCEPT OF BIBLICAL AUTHORITY by Gordon H. Clark. Paper. 24 pages. Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., Box 817, Phillipsburg, New Jersey 08865. 75¢.

BIBLICAL REVELATION AND INSPIRATION by Harold S. Bender. Herald Press, Scottsdale, Pennsylvania. 20 pages. 35¢.

DE PLAATS VAN HET LOVEN AND VAN HET BIDDEN IN HET OUDE TESTAMENT by Prof. Nic. H. Ridderbos. J. H. Kok N. V. 39 pages. Concerning Psalm 50:14, 15.

TO BE NEAR UNTO GOD by Abraham Kuyper. 1979 paperback edition. 679 pages. Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Mich. \$8.95

NURTURING CHILDREN IN THE LORD by Jack Fennema. 162 pages. Baker Book House. Paperback, \$4.95.

A study guide for teachers on developing a biblical approach to discipline.

THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GRACE by Arthur C. Custance. 398 pages. Hardcover. Baker Book House. \$10.95

TULIP — THE FIVE POINTS OF CALVINISM IN THE LIGHT OF SCRIPTURE by Duane Edward Spencer. Paperback. 75 pages. Baker Book House. \$1.45.

THEOLOGICAL ETHICS — FOUNDATIONS (Volume 1) by Helmut Thielicke. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, Mich. Paperback, 697 pages. \$10.95.

"Thielicke is the most thorough Protestant ethicist of our time, with wit, finesse, versatility, and depth." — Journal of the American Academy of Religion.

THEOLOGICAL ETHICS — POLITICS (Volume 2) by Helmut Thielicke. Eerdmans, 696 pages. Paperback. \$10.95.

"Volume 2, *Politics*, considers political ethics in the modern world, the nature of the state, and the theological debate on church and state. The major part of this volume takes up the borderline situations of resistance to state authority and war, including discussions of revolution, military obedience, nuclear war, pacifism, and conscientious objection." — From the Cover.

THE GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT (TO BELIEVERS AND UNBELIEVERS), by C. R. Vaughn. Banner of Truth Trust, Edinburgh, 1975. 415pp. \$8.95. Reviewed by Rev. Jerome Julien, pastor of the First Christian Reformed Church of Pella, Iowa.

This volume, first published in 1894, is by the man who succeeded Robert Dabney as Professor of Theology at the Union Seminary, Richmond, Virginia.

The first part of the book is about the Holy Spirit's gifts to unbelievers: restraint of depravity, awakening, conviction, repentance, faith and regeneration. The second part, and largest, is about the Holy Spirit's gifts to believers: sealing, unction, witness, earnest, leading, intercession and comfort among others.

While certainly not all will agree with what Vaughn writes, he should be read. However, if you are looking for easy reading Vaughn should not be your choice.

KNOW YOUR SELF, Sub-title, "A Unified Self Is the Key to Inner Harmony". David Hugh Freeman, Publisher: The Craig Press, Nutley, New Jersey. Price: \$3.95. Review by Rev. John J. Byker.

This little one hundred page volume can be added to the long list of books which seek to answer man's question: "Who am I?"

The question is especially pressing to men of this century because contemporary man has no personal God. It is to this hunger of man seeking identity, that the author addresses himself. The preface states that aim: "What is it that gives unity to an individual, that constitutes you, that makes you the same amidst bodily changes and changing circumstances?"

This little volume is well worth the time spent in reading. It will definitely be helpful to some, difficult for those who are not familiar with twentieth-century man's problem.

THEOLOGICAL ETHICS — SEX (Volume 3) by Helmut Thielicke. Paperback. Eerdmans, 338 pages. \$6.95.

"Volume 3, *Sex* (previously published under the title *The Ethics of Sex*), considers the duality of man, Eros and Agape, marriage, divorce, and remarriage. Also discussed here are such currently controversial issues as the equality of the sexes, homosexuality, artificial insemination, and abortion" — From the Cover.

BY GRACE THROUGH FAITH, a Synopsis of Reformed Doctrine for Advanced Catechism Classes, Study Groups, and Personal Enrichment by Remkes Kooistra, D. Th. 172 pages. K. Knight Publishing Limited, 99 Niagara Street, St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada L2R 4L3.

THE INTERNATIONAL STANDARD BIBLE ENCYCLOPEDIA. Fully revised. In four volumes. Volume One A-D. 1006 pages. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Mich. Pre-publication price through 12-31-'79. \$27.50.

DREAMS AND VISIONS. Herman Veldkamp. Paideia Press. St. Catharines, Ontario. 1978. 251 pp. \$4.95.

UP WITH CREATION!, edited by Duane T. Gish and Donald H. Rohrer. 1978. 341 pages, paper. Creation-Life Publishers (San Diego, CA 92115). \$3.95. Reviewed by Rev. Henry Petersen.

Acts and Facts is the monthly publication of the Institute for Creation Research. This book contains most of the articles published in *Acts and Facts* during 1976 and 1977, plus the 24 "Impact" articles published during these two years.

The "Impact" articles are the most valuable part of this book. They deal "with the scientific evidences that either support creation or refute evolution on any given topic or discipline." These articles are very well done and are a tribute to the members of the Institute for Creation Research of which Dr. Henry Morris is Director. The Institute is expanding its activities in the

face of growing opposition by evolutionists.

In the Preface we are told: "For additional information on the work of the Institute or to receive a free subscription to *Acts and Facts*, write to ICR, 2716 Madison Avenue, San Diego, California 92116."

THE DEEPER FAITH, by Gordon Girod. 1978 Reprint. 135 pages, paper. Baker Book House. \$1.95. Reviewed by Rev. Henry Petersen.

The subtitle gives the content of this book: An Exposition of the Canons of the Synod of Dort. In addition to a chapter on each of the "five points" of Calvinism, there is one with the title: "Is It a Terrible Faith?" The author's conclusion is a resounding No! This is the faith "once for all delivered to the saints." Refresh your knowledge of the Canons and your appreciation of what they teach and you believe by reading this book.

THE GREAT AWAKENING: A HISTORY OF THE REVIVAL OF RELIGION IN THE TIME OF EDWARDS AND WHITEFIELD, by Joseph Tracy. The Banner of Truth Trust, Edinburgh, 1976. 433 pages. \$9.95. Reviewed by Rev. Jerome Julien, Pastor of the First Christian Reformed Church of Pella, Iowa.

Written some one hundred years after the great revival of 1740 which began in New England, this volume presents a fair appraisal of the good and bad aspects of that important era of church history. The author, a congregational minister, was a historian. Carefully he worked through source material to present this rather definitive work. As the subtitle indicates, the prominent figures in the great revival, Edwards and Whitefield, are seen in relation to their contributions and impact.

Tracy unravels Old and New School Presbyterianism as he lays out the beginnings of the revival. He points out the emphasis on preaching — an important ingredient. He notes that in the more wholesome development of the revival there was a remarkable lack of visions, trances, and revelations. However, where emotional excitement prevailed over the sound exposition of Scripture there was trouble. One example of this is the work of the Rev. James Davenport, outlined in chapter 14.

The last chapter is a discussion of the results of the revival as Tracy saw them. It had its effect on education and even the formation of the United States.

The republication of this volume, first published in 1842, is a real service to the understanding of this portion of the history of the Church.