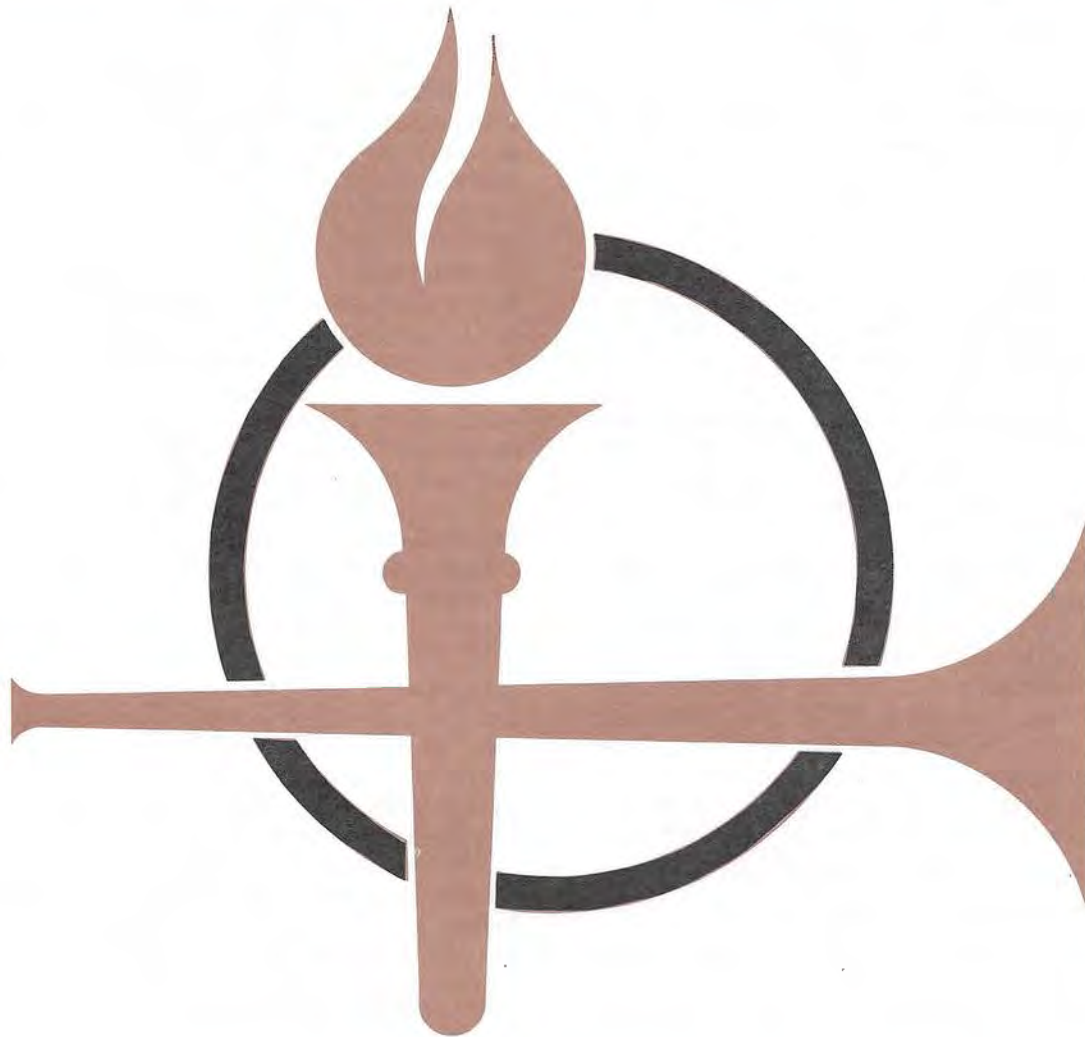


THE OUTLOOK

DEVOTED TO THE EXPOSITION AND DEFENSE OF THE REFORMED FAITH

NOVEMBER 1979



**TWO VIEWS OF REVELATION
CLARITY BY HERESY
HUSBAND AND WIFE**

TWO VIEWS OF REVELATION

John R. Jackson

You don't have to be very old or very wise to notice that things are changing in the Christian Reformed Church. Some of the changes are for the better; few people would want to see everything in the denomination stay the same. At the same time, when the changes involve denial of Biblical truth or compromise with the world, we have reason to be alarmed. The pages of this magazine have repeatedly documented this kind of change in the CRC.

Many contributors to *The Outlook* have also pointed out that those responsible for the trends at work within the denomination hold to a view of Scripture that is unlike the historic position of the church. While this analysis is correct, the problem is even deeper than that. Those pushing for unwelcome changes in the CRC often have a view of revelation that is un-Reformed and heretical.

The Reformed View of Revelation

What's the difference between revelation and Scripture? Scripture is one means of revelation; the other is the creation which we call "general revelation." Revelation refers to God's disclosure of Himself to man. (See Article II of the Belgic Confession.)

The historic, Reformed position on revelation is that God's revelation of Himself to man includes "propositions," or statements of the truth. According to this view, revelation contains information about God that has been written down for us in the Bible.

As a result of our view of revelation, we have maintained that the Bible IS God's Word; when the Bible speaks, God speaks. Faith then involves the acceptance of the Bible as truth and trust in God based on what is revealed about Him in the Scriptures. (See Lord's Day 7, Q & A 21 of the Heidelberg Catechism.) The task of the church as it formulates doctrine is to sum up the truth of the Word and to set that truth forth in a systematic way. Doctrine is either orthodox or heretical depending on whether it faithfully reflects the truth of the Bible.

The "Neo-orthodox" View

In sharp contrast to the historic Reformed view of revelation is what we may term the "neo-orthodox" view. The term "neo-orthodox" refers to a trend of theology that began around the end of World War I. It arose as a reaction to the liberalism of the 19th century, and in comparison to the old liberalism, this new movement appeared to some to be "new" and "orthodox." In fact it is neither new or orthodox, as its teaching regarding revelation demonstrates. Karl Barth, Rudolf Bultmann, and Paul Tillich are but a few representatives of this widespread and complex movement.

The neo-orthodox movement teaches that God reveals Himself *only* through His personal presence;

knowledge or information about God is *never* given through revelation. Revelation is an "event" or an "encounter" with God, and it can never be reduced to words. Advocates of this position accuse their opponents of "Bibliolatry," or making the Bible an idol, because they insist that the Bible IS God's Word.

"Encounter" Replaces Creed

Perhaps you can guess at some of the consequences of this "new" view. The Bible no longer IS God's Word; rather it is a "witness to" the Word of God, a record of the theological reflections of men in the past. The Bible is not the Word, but *becomes* the Word when and if God "encounters" me as I read it. When the Scriptures are seen in this way, then everyone is free to decide for himself what within the Bible he thinks is God's Word and what is not. Faith is man's response to the event of revelation, and it will not take any prescribed form — certainly not the acceptance of any creed or system of truth. Doctrine is reduced to something people make up as they reflect on the encounter they had with God, and it is to be judged as true or false only in terms of human experience. Doctrine is very subjective for the neo-orthodox, that is, no one else can really criticize my "doctrine" since they know nothing about the "encounter" I had. Carried to its logical conclusion, this view of revelation leaves the church with no truth to proclaim, no basis for faith, and no justification for discipline of any kind.

If you have had your ear to the ground, you no doubt recognize elements within the neo-orthodox view — you have seen and heard them within the CRC. The influence of this faulty view of revelation may be seen in a general de-emphasis of the creeds and the knowledge aspect of the faith. All that matters is your "encounter" with God and your "response" to it. (In this connection, see the article by Peter De Jong "Are Christian Schools Teaching the Bible?" in the March 1979 issue.)

The subtle impact of this view of revelation may also be seen in an excessive concern with personal beliefs and feelings, usually accompanied by an unhealthy desire to "share" these with others. The important thing is no longer "what does the Bible say" but "what do you think" or "how do you feel" about the Scripture and its teaching? This is the basic technique of a popular Bible study program, the "Discovery Method." This method instructs you to read through a passage and ask afterward, "what does this mean to you?"

A Destructive Deception

Those who favor the neo-orthodox or "encounter" view of revelation are fond of ridiculing the Reformed position as the "propositional" view. They do their best to convince people that this view is "fundamentalistic" and not really Reformed at all. The suggestion is further made that we think of revelation only in terms of dry, lifeless statements

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about God that misrepresent Him and "restrict His freedom." If you swallow this line, you may well conclude that the "propositional" view and "dead orthodoxy" are one and the same thing.

Naturally dead orthodoxy is a real danger; there is always the possibility that we will have "a form of godliness, but deny the power thereof." (II Timothy 3:5) But to suggest that the only alternative to a cold, intellectualized "faith" is a view of revelation that denies the authority of the Word of God is devilish deception!

It is at this point that we see the worst aspect of the encounter position; it misleads all who are not constantly alert to its cleverness and subtlety. Those who accept this view know how to use words to disguise their real teachings. They use familiar terms that sound pious and traditional, when in fact they "reinterpret" and "redefine" most concepts and terms so that they mean something far different from what the church has historically taught. This means that we must ask what is intended by the reassuring phrases we hear from certain advocates of change. We are again reminded of the timeliness of the Biblical warning: "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves." (Matthew 7:15)

OUR TESTIMONY

The following Christian Reformed ministers have now endorsed the "Testimony" formulated by Peter Y. De Jong, Nelson D. Kloosterman, John H. Piersma, John R. Sittema and Henry B. Vanden Heuvel (and printed in the October and November, 1978, OUTLOOK)

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"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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Bozeman, MT; Peace, Cedar Rapids, IA; Cutlerville East, Cutlerville, MI; Dorr, MI; Drenthe, MI; Dutton, MI; Irving Park Midland Park, NJ; South Grandville, Grandville, MI; Grace, Kalamazoo, MI; Kanawha, IA; Lynnwood, WA; North Blendon, MI; Pompton Plains, NJ; I Randolph, WI; Ridott, IL; Sanborn, IA; Sibley, IA; Bethel, Sioux Center, IA; Bethany, South Holland, IL; Sully, IA; Telkwa, BC; Vogel Center, MI; I Waupun, WI.

The Fellowship Board is grateful for the men who are committed to the Reformed Faith and willing to take a public stand on the issues raised in Our Testimony — men to whom the churches may look for continuing leadership as we seek to remain faithful to our heritage.

reformed women speak

FAMILY PLANNING (II)

Laurie Vanden Heuvel

When we lived in California my family and I would spend many summer afternoons at the ocean-side. Often I would scoop up a handful of sand and let it slowly dribble through my fingers. I often thought of that promise God made to Abraham, "I will make your descendants as numerous as the . . . sand on the seashore" (Gen. 22:17, NIV). I was glad that God's use of "sand" referred only to the vast *number* of Abraham's future seed. It did not refer to the *design* of Abraham's future seed because as I examined those grains of sand, I noticed that each grain was an individual, a complete entity, totally unrelated to the grain on top of, underneath or next to it. That is not true of God's spiritual "sand." Every child born into this world is born into a pre-established relationship, automatically inheriting a mother, a father, grandparents, brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles and cousins. Unlike sand, this child grows, matures, and he himself establishes new relationships. To one he becomes a husband, to another a father, to another an uncle, to a whole new group of people, an "in-law." That child is not an isolated grain.

How thankful I am that God does not structure human life according to the pattern of sand. He chooses rather to create human "sand" along "family lines" — father, mother and children — so that each child born into this world has a God-given right to claim the love and faithfulness of two parents. What a blight on our society when parents separate from each other, robbing children of their birthright and destroying God's divinely planned ecological balance in family living.

Why did God choose the "family plan" to advance human civilization?

The first reason is simply biological: the human race had to be propagated.

But second, it is within the family that the child is protected, nurtured and trained. The second table of God's law dealing with love to our neighbor, begins with the fifth commandment which deals with the home. The placement in that order is no accident. "Love to neighbor" must begin at *home*. No world problems, moral, social, economic or any other, will be solved nationally or internationally if they are not solved first in the home. Creation began with the *home* of Adam and Eve as the base, and obedience was the condition for true happiness, a condition Adam failed to fulfill because of his sin. Redemption began with the *home* of Joseph and Mary as the base and obedience the condition. Jesus met the condition and through His perfect obedience we may have victory over sin in the home and subsequently in the nation and in the world.

Third, it is within the family that the principle of *love* begins. In God's plan, it is love in which each child is conceived; it is love with which each child is reared; it is love which each person, having received

in childhood, must seek to implement in all the relationships of his life: marriage, parenthood, business and social life. It is love which transforms a "house" into a "home."

If that love, developed and practiced at home, radiated out to all areas of human endeavor, what a changed world this would be! Police officers could retire, courts could recess permanently, and prisons could close.

The family is in real trouble today precisely because too many people either do not *understand* or do not *accept* God's prescription for true happiness. While some people decry ecological ruin in nature, they play fast and loose with the ecologically balance environment designed by God for the growth of human beings. They allow and promote a "pollution" in the press, in films and in day-by-day living which destroys the foundation and fabric of the *society* which inhabits the environment they are trying to rescue from ecological disaster. It makes no sense at all.

Join us next month in watching God's remedy become a reality, God's plan become a product in the Christian home. ●

NOTE: The address of Mrs. Vanden Heuvel, editor of this department, is now 415 Arizona, S.W., Orange City, Iowa 51041.

CHAPTER NEWS

The Northwest Iowa Chapter of Reformed Fellowship has been quite active in the past year, and we want to share with you what we have done.

In a series of three lecture/discussion meetings we discussed the document "Our Reformed Testimony." The first of these meetings was held at the Bethel CRC in Sioux Center, where the Rev. J. Piersma discussed the history and background of the Testimony. At the second meeting, held in the Rock Rapids CRC, the Rev. N. Kloosterman discussed the first five points of the Testimony. The second half of the Testimony was presented by the Rev. J. Sittema at the First CRC of Sheldon. Attendance at the meetings was good and discussions were lively.

On July 13 we held our Annual Meeting, jointly with the Northwest Consistorial Conference, to hear elder W. Wagonaar and the Rev. J. Piersma give their delegate reports on Synod.

We have consistently tried to give the Reformed Fellowship a more positive image, and have concentrated on informing the church people of trends in the Christian church.

Through church bulletin announcements and bulletin inserts we have increased our chapter membership roster.

We look forward to another year of activity in which we seek to honor our God and be of service to His people.

Cordially,

Dr. Aaldert Mennega, Sec'y
Northwest Iowa Chapter ●

NOUTHETIC COUNSELING III

WORKING INTENSIVELY TOWARD BIBLICAL CHANGE

John Kruis

This concludes the series of Rev. John Kruis of Sussex, New Jersey, on the biblical method of counseling promoted by Dr. Jay Adams.

As nouthetic counselors help identify unsolved problems they also direct the counselees and work intensively with them on scriptural change. They do not assume that they will understand what is required of them. Nor do they accept the idea of the Rogerian and other non-directive counselors that it is not their business to tell counselees what they must believe and what they ought to do. Rather, they give very explicit instruction, confronting them especially with the Word of God. Do we not confess that Word to be the infallible rule for faith and life? It is ideally suited for every counseling case. For, "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work" (II Tim. 3:16, 17). And so it is that we seek to bring the light of the Word to shine on every problem, to guide and direct each counselee. We give detailed instruction in the Scriptures as they have bearing on each specific problem. This is true also when it comes right down to the nitty gritty things of life. For example, recently I spent the greater part of two counseling sessions instructing a father (who had physically abused his sons) on how to properly guide and discipline his children. Very practical instruction is also given on how to apply the principles set forth in the Word of God.⁹ This is made effective through the work of the Holy Spirit!

Homework?

At the same time nouthetic counselors give homework assignments as they work with the counselees. To this one hears such objections as:

"That's really being naive."

"What an unsophisticated approach to counseling."

"You can't deal effectively with complex problems in such a simplistic way. . . . Treat people like that? That will really turn them off."

This aspect of nouthetic counseling perhaps receives the most severe criticism. I must admit that when I first read *Competent to Counsel*, when Jay Adams talked about giving homework assignments, this did not appeal to me. Not at all! It seemed to me too that I would certainly turn people off by trying

such a thing. Wouldn't they be insulted - being treated like juveniles, or high school students at best? For about a year I used other aspects of nouthetic counseling, although falteringly, but rejected the idea of giving homework assignments. Finally, after reading *The Christian Counselor's Manual* (pp. 294-343) where Adams thoroughly explains the rationale for the mechanics of homework assignments, I was ready to give it a try. I soon learned by experience (and by observation as I took the Pastor's Training Course under Dr. Adams) that giving homework assignments is one of the key factors in the success of nouthetic counseling. When counselees do their homework faithfully they ususally make rapid progress in solving their problems. In fact, it can be said that usually the progress counselees make is in direct proportion to the faithfulness with which they carry out their homework assignments.

Examples

What are these assignments like? They are very specific instructions on how to work at change in the areas in which problems have developed. What do they include? They include such things as: reading and studying specified Bible passages that have bearing on their problems; reading what certain Christian authors have written on these matters; keeping record of the problems that arise between counseling sessions, indicating how they were handled and how they should have been handled; keeping a record of failures to overcome a particular sin. They include specific directions to take action, such as breaking off a wrong relationship; going to a person to effect a reconciliation; looking for employment; spending time with the family; establishing regular family devotions; setting up a family budget.¹⁰

Here are some samples of homework assignments given in actual counseling cases. In the case of Dave and Betty (mentioned previously): (1) "Read Eph. 5: 21-33 and each of you write down in your own words what God is saying to you in this passage of Scripture." (On the one hand Dave had woefully neglected to take leadership in the home and had failed in very many ways to manifest love. On the other hand Betty was not submissive to her husband.) (2) "Each make a list of your sins in your marriage so that we can go to work on change in those areas." (3) "Keep a record of the problems that arise this week. Indicate how you handled them and how you should have handled them" (using the PROBLEM-SOLUTION SHEET).¹¹ (4) "Have four family conferences this week, following the instructions given to you." (5) "Read chapters 1 to 4 in *Christian Living In The Home*."¹² For Dave only: (1) "To help overcome the sins against the seventh commandment, read the assigned Scripture passages and write down in your own words what bearing this has on your problem." (2) "Change your working hours so that you can spend more time with your wife and family (he had agreed that this should and could be done)." (3) "Make a list of things you should do around the home and begin this week to do them." For Betty

alone: (1) "To help overcome the sin of pride, read the assigned passages of Scripture and write down at least seven things the Lord is saying to you about pride." (2) "Read Chapter 6, 'A Word to Wives,' in *Christian Living In The Home*." (3) "To break the habit of nagging and criticizing your husband, keep a record this week of the times you criticize and/or nag him, indicating what occasioned it." (To break such habits this kind of assignment is given for several weeks, until the habit is broken.) (4) "Look for opportunities to compliment Dave and express gratitude for the things he does." (You see, it is not sufficient to no longer do the wrong things, one must develop the habit of doing the right things. Put off and put on.)

Dealing With Anger

Take also Bill's case. He, a sophomore, had just been suspended from high school for the second time because he had started a fist-fight with another student. The data gathered in the first counseling session indicated that Bill habitually gave violent expression to his anger. This was true at school, at home or wherever a conflict arose. He was a hot-tempered person. These are some of the assignments he was given as he worked at overcoming the sin of handling anger in the wrong way: (1) "Apologize to the teachers and others you have wronged and ask them to forgive you." (This he did, and returned the next week with very evident joy because broken relationships were restored in the right way; a new experience in his life.) (2) "Read the assigned Bible passages dealing with anger and write down at least 10 things God is saying to you about anger." (3) "Pray daily that you may overcome this sin." (4) "Read the pamphlet by Dr. Adams on 'What Do You Do When Anger Gets The Upper Hand.'" (5) "Make a list of at least eight things you can do to show kindness to your parents, brother and sisters, and do them this week." (An angry person is usually very self-centered. He must become one who thinks of the needs of others, become self-giving instead of self-seeking. Put off and put on.) Bill did this assignment with special interest and repeated it two or three times. Each week he could hardly wait to tell me about the things he had done to please others. By carrying out his homework assignments Bill changed fantastically in a short time. We did, of course, also work with the total home situation, clearing up other problems that had contributed to his trouble.

Weekly "Coaching"

To make this method effective, nouthetic counselors schedule weekly counseling. Although this is perhaps quite apparent from what has already been said, I make a special point of it now for a very good reason. I have spoken to colleagues who have partially accepted the nouthetic principles and method of counseling, but have not yet scheduled regular weekly counseling. And, many parishioners do not expect busy pastors to do so.¹³ They would expect this of a professional counselor. Yet it is very

essential. It is quite ineffective for a counselor to give all the counsel he can in two or three sessions, and then say something like this, "If you keep this advice well in mind and carry it out, I'm sure your problems will be cleared up. I trust that you will go to work on it. Let's see how it goes." That would be like a basketball coach giving all the instruction he can in one or two weeks to the players and then saying, "Now remember all that I have told you - and practice it." You recognize that this just would not work. Right? So it is with counseling. Soon after counselees begin to work for biblical change in order to solve their problems, there is change. There's movement in the right direction. This momentum must be maintained. To maintain it the coach, the counselor, must be in there working with them each week. The counselees need stimulation, prodding, repeated admonition, correction, encouragement and additional counsel (along with the weekly homework assignments) as they continue to work on change and become involved in the changing situation. Without this, most people would flounder and/or give up.

Furthermore, problems usually have many strands. Seldom can all of the strands be discovered and dealt with adequately in two or three weeks. In fact, often, as we work our way through the problems, the most essential data comes out after the first or second counseling session. As we go over the homework and discuss that which happened between counseling sessions, counselees help to clarify their problems and reveal how they are handling them. This gives the counselor the opportunity to give further counsel in the light of the new data and the changing situation.

Active Sanctification

What happens through this kind of weekly counseling? Through the sustained efforts of the counselees as they do their homework faithfully(?) The Holy Spirit works change in their hearts and lives. You see, this is really working at sanctification, zeroing in on those areas of life in which there is special, urgent need, usually the areas in which distressing problems have come. It is putting off the old man and putting on the new (Eph. 4:22-24). It is working out one's salvation (Phil. 2:12, 13) in specific problem areas; actively putting to death "whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry" (Col. 3:5); also ridding oneself of "all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, filthy language" (Col. 3:8). It is also clothing oneself "with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience" (Col. 3:12). So then the ugly obstacles that have been so destructive in one's personal, marital and/or family life are removed. New and godly attitudes, habits, ways of acting and reacting are developed. Consequently, personal problems are cleared up. Marriages are saved, rebuilt and made solid. Relationships are restored. Homes are transformed. What have been regarded as psychiatric and/or emotional problems are solved. Feelings are changed. Life takes on a new outlook and fre-

quently a new direction. God is glorified. That which no mere counselor could ever do the Holy Spirit powerfully accomplishes through this means.

In the Lord's Work

This is neither to say, nor to imply, that all cases work out the way we would desire. Counselors sometimes fail. Some people proudly and stubbornly refuse to recognize their real problem and/or refuse to change. However, nouthetic counselors can rejoice in seeing a high rate of success.

Let me emphasize once more, though, that to God alone belongs all the glory. For it is He who changes and transforms lives through His Word. In nouthetic counseling we are always prayerfully working with His Word. It is so wonderfully true that "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for *teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness*, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work." (II Tim. 3:16)

9. For a very interesting and helpful exposé on the contrasting unbiblical, non-directive Rogerian approach see *Competent To Counsel*, pp. 78-92.
10. See *Manual*, pp. 301-310, where Adams lists and explains six purposes for homework assignments, and pp. 318-320, for samples he gives.
11. Forms designed for various kinds of assignments have been published by Jay Adams. The Christian Counselor's Starter Packet can be obtained from the Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., Box 817, Phillipsburg, N.J. 08865.
12. Some might wonder, "Why such a strong use of the works of Jay Adams?" We do, of course, also assign reading in other publications. However, Jay Adams' publications are not only excellent. They are designed especially for use in counseling. I have found it to be very helpful to have books, booklets and pamphlets available in my study so that counselees can obtain them at the time the assignments are given to them. Then I know they will have the material they need. No time is lost.
13. If there's a will there's a way. I have scheduled counseling both before and after evening catechism classes and society meetings. For example, I went to the home of one young couple for marriage counseling weekly, after the young people's catechism class, for about 12 weeks. ●

THE STAFF OF LIFE

In the sweat of his brow,
 Man labors
 for the bread
 which never satisfies.
 With the thorns on His brow,
 Christ labored
 and became the Bread
 for man's questing soul
 which ever satisfies.

Marie Brinks
 6867 Dutton Ave., SE
 Dutton, MI 49511

THE INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF THE CHILD

Christian Compassion

John Vander Ploeg

How often we hear it said: *What you don't know won't hurt you.* A dictum that may be true at times but also dead wrong at other times. It all depends on what it is that we don't know.

Take the case of this year 1979 being the "International Year of the Child." Writing in a recent issue of our local newspaper William Raspberry states: "Already IYC is half over, and most Americans — let alone the rest of the world — are only vaguely aware that 1979 IS the International Year of the Child." Debate about the possible effects of this IYC is therefore "silly," in Raspberry's judgment. And we, in our lethargy, may like to fool ourselves with the idea that 'ignorance is bliss' and, so, why be disturbed? But, if and when the welfare and future of the world's children are at stake, we would be fools to put it out of mind and go back to sleep.

The facts are these. In 1976 the United Nations decided to make 1979 the International Year of the Child with a view to "improving the welfare of children." Earlier, in 1959, the U.N. had adopted a set of ten principles as the *U.N. Declaration of the Rights of the Child*. On April 14, 1978 President Carter signed an Executive Order declaring 1979 "The International Year of the Child" in the U.S. So, here we are with what is supposed to be a special year intended for the welfare of all children, a year that is fast slipping away.

What shall we say and do about all this? Some may feel free to ignore the whole thing. Many will probably merely nod approval and then let it go at that. As Christians, we should indeed take note and also redouble our efforts to show Christian compassion toward all children, as well as toward adults, whose suffering and wretched circumstances are so prevalent and painful that we shall never know the half of them.

A shallow response — Unfortunately, there are many whose observance of the International Year of the Child (hereinafter referred to as the IYC) will begin and end in a merely civil or humane compassion. Without God in the world, they live out their lives on the horizontal plane, always without any vertical reference.

The shallowness of their way of living would sometimes seem laughable if the matter were not so serious.

The other day I picked up a flier advertising The Ionia (Michigan) Free Fair that claims it to be the "World's Largest Free Fair." The attractions, both good and bad usually found at a county fair, are graphically portrayed in this brochure. The striking thing is that at the head of the brochure you find this, "Celebrate!! International Year of the Child at The Ionia Free Fair." Children too are entitled to diversion and entertainment but, unless we have something more wholesome to offer them than thrills and spills, clowns, magic, fireworks, and square dancing, may the Lord have mercy on them

and us.

Now don't be so unfair as to say that I condemn everything shown at a county fair. My point is that, when a thing is commercialized, secularized, or exploited, it ought not to be confused with a worthy compassion for the child. For this reason I cannot warm up to those telephone calls asking that we pay for tickets to enable handicapped children to attend the Shrine Circus. Woe to us if all we have to offer the children is stones instead of bread or a serpent instead of a fish. In this we do well to recall from our Catechism that to be truly Christian, instead of being merely civil or humane, our compassion must arise out of true faith, it must have God's law as its norm, and it must have the glory of our God as its motive.

Countless demands — That all around us, there are countless demands that we show, by word and deed, Christian compassion toward deprived children is obvious for all who have eyes to see and ears to hear.

How do you and I react when we are confronted with the needs of the poor and the hungry whether they be close to home or in other lands? Thank God for what we may be doing through the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee or other agencies for relief. But those who know the poverty and the hunger statistics do not want us to forget that even our best efforts in this are no more than a drop in the bucket.

A convenient cop-out for us when we want to still the accusing voice of conscience on this score is to affirm that no one needs to be hungry and destitute unless he is shiftless, lazy, and irresponsible. However, what may be true of some or even many of this world's poor may never be made to be a blanket condemnation by which to excuse closing our wallets and our hearts to any and every plea for help.

Of the children in the Third World, aged from 7 to 12, we are told that, although there are 201 million in school, there are 224 million who are not in school. The prediction is that by 1985 there will be 375 million not in school. To us for whom an education is so readily available, the challenge comes for us to help in educating these millions.

A practical suggestion — To enumerate or visualize all the needs of deprived children throughout this world would be impossible. If only we could do something to help. Well, we can't do *all* that needs to be done, but we are inexcusable if we sit back and do nothing.

In his book *The Christian Encounters a Hungry World*, Paul Simon states the challenge well: "The cry of the world's hungry is a cry to the well-fed Christian world. To turn deaf ears to that cry by our lack of sympathetic action is to turn deaf ears to the Man on the cross" (p. 46).

A practical suggestion is in order. Christmas is not yet at hand, but it will be upon us once again

before we know it. Think of all the Christmas parties held every year and of our lavish giving to each other for all these occasions. We joke about trying to think of what to buy for the person who already has everything. Our children and grandchildren receive gifts piled upon gifts. Now why not have someone at such parties show a film or in some other way depict the crying needs of the hungry and starving children in some specific area where the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee is active in relief work. And why not agree to contribute what we would otherwise spend on gifts for each other at these parties to support that work. Having done this for the past two years at my wife's suggestion, our family has found that it is more blessed to give than to receive and that these Christmas parties were the best we ever had. Christmas in this International Year of the Child should be an excellent occasion to begin this practice. It is gratifying to find that the grandchildren also get into the spirit of this giving and are willing to contribute of their own savings when they begin to see what the needs really are. The CRWRC will gladly provide information about their projects for this purpose upon request.

How good it is to know that, alongside of the gospel proclamation as a priority, the CRWRC is finding avenues and opportunities to minister to those who are homeless, hungry, and destitute whether close at home or in other lands. Consider the following items recently reported in The Banner (7/29/79):

"CRWRC has sent \$87,000 worth of food and \$20,000 in cash to assist war victims in Nicaragua. The local protestant churches, through which CRWRC works, have been instrumental in reaching the most needy. Airlifts from Guatemala and truck transports from Honduras have brought life-saving food to refugees as well as to citizens left in the war zone. Through this outreach we are able to help 18,000 families, more than 100,000 people. The need continues to grow."

About those 'boat people,' whose tragic lot is depicted for us by the news media day after day and of whom 260,000 are thought to have perished at sea, we are informed:

"CRWRC is seeking churches willing to sponsor Indochinese refugees. In the U.S. the process for clearing refugees as immigrants remains a battle of red-tape. CRWRC is lending its support to agencies working at speeding up the procedure in the United States. Canada is already settling the first of its refugees and the Christian Reformed response has been gratifying there with over 130 church groups offering sponsorship."

What a challenge this is for us as individuals, families, and congregations, for a generous outpouring of Christian compassion — a challenge for us who have so much to help those who have so little!

To show compassion is to follow in the footsteps of our Lord who set this before us both by precept and by example. No, we do not engage in Christian compassion in order to be saved but, rather, because we are saved. Works of compassion are the beautiful fruits that grow on the tree of true Christian faith.

Our dream — Now let's dream together for a moment and also pray that the dream may come true. Imagine the 67,682 families in the CRC setting aside the money it would cost to buy gifts for each other at just one of their Christmas parties or get-togethers this year and donating it for one or another of the relief projects carried on by the CRWRC. The sum might prove to be staggering. The joy experienced in so doing would be indescribable. Every year we deplore the commercialization and secularization of Christmas by which we are so readily swept along — a tyranny from which there seems to be no escape. A CRWRC Christmas party could do wonders to recapture the true Christmas spirit so often missing.

Of course, we need not wait until Christmas to send our gifts to the CRWRC for the works of Christian compassion. There is no end to the needs and these needs are pressing right now and all the time. The suggestion about this every-family Christmas-party-giving as a concerted and united effort could yield a new and greater outpouring of compassion for the needy, a Christmas joy that all the trinkets, toys, and earthly treasures cannot give, and the praise of our Lord who would have His boundless compassion flow through us to others so that they may see our good works and glorify our Father who is in heaven.

Postscript — In order to keep matters in their proper perspective, the following items should be appended to the above plea for a generous exercise of humanitarian compassion.

1. As Christian parents we should be on our guard lest any government appointed agency gain control of our children and their training. Recently a full-page newspaper ad warned against this in no uncertain terms: "One of the key thrusts of IYC is, uniform control over the experiences of all children. That is, there should be no variation from one school to another. This leaves no room for Christian Education or other alternatives to a centrally controlled public education system . . ."

For further information the ad tells us to write f.a.m.i.l.y.s (Fathers and Mothers in Love Yielding Support), P.O. Box 2626, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 49501). The least we can do is look into this upon receipt of the information offered. It would be folly, as the experience of those in Communist-dominated countries should teach us, to assume that "it can't happen here," and to refuse to be disturbed. On this side of glory there is no paradise in which the old serpent does not raise its ugly head.

2. In exercising Christian compassion, it cannot be overemphasized that first things must be kept first. The spiritual needs of those who are hungry, poor, and destitute must always take precedence in our ministry to their needs.

Food for the soul and food for the body must always go together like the two sides of one and the same coin. Relief workers who do not recognize this and are unable to address themselves to the one as well as the other simply are not qualified. Let us pray fervently that our Lord may supply capable and dedicated workers able to show compassion by

offering spiritual aid as well as the material and physical.

3. In observing the IYC, as Christian parents we should have a sharpened realization of our covenant commitment before the Lord for the well-being of our covenant children.

The Christian training and provision for our children must be an ongoing activity for every year, every day, and every hour of their lives. In Deuteronomy 6: 6, 7 this is spelled out clearly: "And these words which I command thee this day, shall be upon thy heart; and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thy house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down and when thou risest up." There is never to be any letup or break in this covenantal care and training in the home, in the church, and in the school. Nothing may be allowed to interfere with it. This is a responsibility to be assumed as second to none. Those who exercise it faithfully will reap rich dividends both for time and for eternity.

The need for a greater knowledge and appreciation of that glorious covenant of grace ought to be apparent to us. To help fill this need the recent book by J. G. Voss on *The Covenant of Grace* is heartily

recommended. It consists of thirty-five lessons and can be used for study by a group or class as well as by the parents and children at home. It may be ordered from the Board of Education and Publication, Reformed Presbyterian Church, 800 Wood Street, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15221 for \$1.95.

4. Finally, there is bitter and tragic irony in the proclamation of a Year of the Child while at the same time the wholesale murder of unborn children is being condoned as abortions in the U.S. reach the staggering figure of a million a year. A God, in whose sight children are very precious is not mocked. Easy and rampant divorce, broken homes, pornography and sodomy, now boldly clamoring for acceptance — these and other evils are ruthlessly destroying the foundations of our society, with the children often the victims on whom they prey. Children allowed to become television addicts become easy dupes for the soul-destroying forces to which their impressionable minds are daily being exposed.

May God have mercy upon us as a nation, as parents and as families. May He lead us to repent lest we perish with a world that is hastening on to a holocaust of destruction and doom that cannot be averted except through Christ as the only Savior of those who look to Him for deliverance. ●

REFORMED OR PRESBYTERIAN (IV)

Noel Weeks

THE BIBLE AND THEOLOGY

The second major issue which I mentioned above was that of the way we obtain truth from Scripture. The relation between Scripture and theology has become especially problematical. Once again it is difficult to tell exactly what is being said. For the Presbyterian one of the problems is that "theology" is described in a way that has little relationship to the way he has experienced theology. Theology is depicted in an abstruse, theoretical discipline conducted by ivory-tower academics with no contact with the real, practical world of every day faith. One can understand how such a view might arise in the Dutch cultural context with its sharp distinction between professionals and ordinary people. The distinction between theoretical theology and practical faith fits such a distinction.

The Westminster Confession is particularly attacked for being theoretical theology. I realise that with adherents to the Philosophy of the Cosmogenic Idea (Dooyeweerdians) this is part of an adherence to a whole philosophical system. For the moment I am concerned with the believability of the charge that theology has no contact with real, personal Christian faith. May I be allowed a personal reminiscence? During my days in the Presbyterian Church of Australia I once belonged to a youth

group that, of its own volition, chose the Westminster Confession for its midweek studies. Of course there were those who disapproved. The powers that be in a church that had long since forsaken the Reformed faith did not take kindly to the fact that we had rediscovered the gospel! If farmers, clerks, secretaries, students (of agriculture, physics, zoology etc.) may be "theologians" then we were theologians. We did not find the Confession a "theoretical," impractical document. We found it intensely relevant to our struggle to bring the church back to the gospel. That may seem far from the experience of many Reformed youth groups. If the churches are constantly being told, directly or indirectly, that there is a cleavage between theology and practical faith then it is not surprising if they believe the confessions to be incomprehensible to ordinary believers.

Is There A System Of Doctrine?

The issue is, however, more serious than if it were only a different experience of the relevance of the confessions. Even the possibility of a system of doctrine, such as is embodied in the confessions is being questioned. Along with this goes a questioning of the way Reformed theology has obtained truth from the Scriptures. The heaviest attack falls upon the Westminster Confession which explicitly makes not only Scripture but also what may "by good and necessary consequence be deduced from Scripture" authoritative. We also hear the accusa-

Dr. Weeks of Sydney, Australia, continues his comments on problems which arise as Reformed and Presbyterians seek to cooperate there.

tion that older Reformed theology saw the Scripture as a series of unconnected statements of philosophical truth from which other statements of truth were to be derived by logical deduction.

Certainly there is a danger of quoting of proof-texts out of their context. This problem was weighing on the Orthodox Presbyterians when some years ago they appointed a committee to revise the proof texts of the confession. Using statements by Job's friends as proof texts for orthodox doctrine was felt to be unacceptable!

However the issues go beyond the simple question of whether a particular text has been quoted in context or not. The point at issue is whether statements of Scripture (in context) should be taken as statements of truth on the basis of which we may make theological conclusions. Once again I am not certain of what the Neo-Reformed would propose as an alternative. Sometimes it seems as though the possibility of any certain theology is denied.

Berkhouwer

As an illustration of this I will take a passage from Berkouwer. The context is the discussion of what in older theological terminology would have been called the relationship between God's omnipotence and Christ's humiliation but which in modern discussion emerges more as the dialectic of the power and the weakness of God:

"Thus it is that we encounter various expressions, all of them inadequate, and all of which need qualification to ward off misunderstanding. Interpretations, for this reason, are never dead-end. Each one is open to new insights. Trying to avoid empty notions of transcendence and facile notions of supernaturalism, we counter with insights that come as a shock to many. But they come as a shock because they express what the heart already experiences of the emptiness of many older concepts that no longer are in touch with reality (of H.M. Kuitert, *The Necessity of Faith*, E.T. 1975). In the environs of Jesus Christ, we are conscious of both transcendence and closeness. It is a transcendence, however, that is not an empty transcendence. And it is a closeness that reveals that God's answer transcends even our highest concepts. If we keep this transcendence in view, we will not be easily shocked by the protests against misconstrued 'theism' and empty 'supernaturalism'." (*A Half Century Of Theology*, Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1977 pp. 257f).

One could cite many similar passages out of Berkouwer. Does Berkouwer merely wish to remind us of the incomprehensibility and transcendence of God as it was confessed in older Reformed theology? Or does he go beyond so that this transcendence has results far different from the classical view: that is, it calls in question the certainty of every theological statement? If as Berkouwer says a little earlier, quoting Von Balthasar "every human formulation is found wanting" (*ibid* pp. 255f), can there be any certainty in our talk about God?

An Appeal To "Intent" Behind Scripture And Creed

I think we have to balance this and understand this along with another dominant element in Berkouwer. That is the appeal to an "intent" behind a document, be it a Biblical or creedal document. It is as though there lurks something behind the text that is more ultimate than the text could ever express in words. Thus in his article on the Canons of Dordt Berkouwer makes the contrast clear: "If one starts from *faithfulness* to the confession and only regards it as present if there is an integral and total reception of the text, which lies before us with all its words, concepts, conclusive turnings plus all the Scripture proofs, then one must call the shift in the confession of election unfaithfulness with respect to the confession. In contrast it seems to me however legitimate to enquire after the deepest intent of the confession." (*Vragen Rondom de Belijdens, Gereformeerde Theologisch Tijdschrift* 63 (1963), 19).

Here there is a faithfulness to the total text of the confession and its conceptual framework which can be set in contrast to a faithfulness to the deepest intent of the confession. For the moment what concerns me about this is the fact that it represents a very different way of arriving at the meaning of a text than historical-grammatical exegesis. In some ways it overcomes the problems that have already been mentioned. Berkouwer basically accepts the judgment that the Canons of Dordt, with their viewing of God as a *cause* of election and reprobation, have accepted a contemporary philosophical framework. Historical relativism thus threatens the Canons. The appeal to the deeper intent is an attempt to save something from the Canons. It also lessens the problem that the actual formulations may attempt to express what lies beyond all human formulations. The focus turns from the precise phraseology to something far less definable.

Substituting Intuition For Intelligible Words

I think it fair to say that instead of a theological truth logically deduced from what the words say we now have an intuitive approach to theological truth. I would not for a moment want to attack the legitimate place of intuition. We probably reach far more conclusions by intuition than we realize. However an intuitive understanding that can be set in actual contrast to the specific words of a text is another matter.

For the subject that primarily concerns us there is another problem: communication. How do the Neo-Reformed communicate their intuitively grasped insights to those who expect proof from the actual words? The problems that the adherents to the Cosmomic Idea Philosophy have experienced is a good illustration. Here also you have an intuitively grasped insight. The adherent sees the system as solving so many problems and putting so many things in perspective. Yet how can he communicate that? There is no one fact, truth or logic or even Biblical passage, (or series of them for that

matter) upon which to build his proof. The potential convert must be fed illustrations or anecdotes or exposures of the pitfalls of all other systems, until he sees that this is indeed the way the world is made. If he proves obdurate he is dismissed as in the grip of a deadly "ism." I think this dilemma of communication plays a major role in the tendency of people to polarise into defenders of attackers of Dooyeweerd. I fear the same thing in the case of the attempt to replace verbal exegesis by intuitional exegesis.

Attack On God's Sovereignty And Escape From Scripture

Intuitional exegesis brings with it the danger of the "hidden agenda." A certain insight may be reached for reasons which do not have to be argued out. One may "see" certain things in the text which no exegesis of the words could ever establish. Thus one can think of all sorts of philosophical reasons why any notion of God as "cause" of election or reprobation must be banished from theology. Are these the reasons why Ridderbos and Berkouwer so adamantly affirm that the Pauline doctrine of election bears no relation to the doctrine in older Reformed theology? There is an embarrassment with the idea of God as cause that did not seem to trouble Paul! One is inclined to wonder why Paul talked about an election determined before the foundation of the world when his real deepest intent (according to these theologians) was only to stress the gracious character of salvation. Has an "intent" been perceived that does not fit with Paul's actual words on the subject? Perhaps the more basic question would be: Does not this method of exegesis allow freedom for the interpreter to find intentions that were far from the mind of the writer?

The older way of arguing from the express statements of Scripture can be compared with various philosophical notions of deductive reasoning. However intuitional reasoning is not without its philosophical promoters. Even the dabbler in philosophy like myself cannot help but be struck by parallels to the phenomenology of Husserl in some of this. Given Dooyeweerd's acknowledged influence from Husserl and the occurrence of other elements in common like the naive/theoretical distinction, one grows rather suspicious. Just as the charge of historical relativism can rebound upon one making it, charging all one's theological opponents with secret loyalty to an apostate philosophical system can do the same. Perhaps those who so quickly accuse the older Reformed theology of philosophical attachments have some of their own.

Scripture, Not Philosophy Must Guide

In the last analysis Scripture and not philosophy must be the test. It is of course very "Biblicist" to look to Scripture for the methods to interpret Scripture but let us do it anyway. One can say, of course, as some do, that the N.T. writers were misquoting the O.T. but were nevertheless true to its "deepest intent." But that is reading our methods of exegesis into the N.T. writers. What do the writers depict themselves as doing? Obviously they are appealing to the words of the Scripture. Is it not at least strange that they should be doing what we are not supposed to do? As they build arguments from the wording of O.T. texts do they not show a curious resemblance to what Christians have done ever since? If I were committed to historical relativism then what Paul does could have no relevance for me. But I am not committed to relativism; I am committed to Scripture. ●

CHARITY PROMOTED BY HERESY

Peter De Jong

"For Use In Worship"

The Christian Reformed World Relief organization in promoting its new "World Hunger Program" recently sent Christian Reformed ministers several sheets of "Litanies/Prayers/Selected Scripture Passages for Use in Worship." The third page of this material under the heading "3. BODY AND BREAD" had the "Leader" quote the texts "I am the Bread of Life, says the Lord. The one who comes to Me shall not hunger." (John 6:35) and "This is My Body, says the Lord, broken for you." (1 Corinthians 11:24). They were followed by these responsive readings:

PEOPLE: His Body is Bread, broken for me.
LEADER: You are the Body of Christ.
PEOPLE: We are His Body.
LEADER: His Body is Bread.
PEOPLE: We are Bread.
LEADER: His Body is Broken.
PEOPLE: We are Broken.

LEADER: His Body is the Bread which He gives for the life of the world. (John 6:51)
PEOPLE: We are His Body.
We are Broken.
We are Bread for the world.
ALL: ALLELUIA!

What the Texts Really Say

Even the most casual reading of these scripture passages in their Biblical setting makes unmistakably plain that the Lord was calling attention to Himself as the unique Son of God who by His one sacrifice of Himself would give those who believed in Him eternal life so that they "shall live forever" (John 6:58). In saying "This is my body, broken for you" as he instituted the Lord's Supper He again called attention to His unique atoning sacrifice. The New Testament again and again stresses that unique character of Christ and His saving work,

notably in such places as Heb. 9:25-10:18 and in 1 Peter 3:18, "Christ also suffered for sins once, the righteous for the unrighteous, that He might bring us to God."

Perverting Bible Doctrine

Now this suggested liturgy by identifying the church's giving to the world's poor with this sacrifice of Christ, not only grossly perverts these Scriptures and the Lord's Supper, but also implicitly denies Christ's unique atonement. It teaches the people to see in Christ's giving of Himself as our Savior nothing more than we ourselves are encouraged to do in giving to help other people. The treatment of these Scriptures in effect reduces God's Gospel of the giving of His Son to nothing more than a Humanist benevolence program. And notice also that the very texts with which Our Lord in John 6 warned against a movement that would pervert His work into merely providing food that perishes instead of the eternal life He promised, are in this liturgy twisted into supporting such a program to merely feed the physically hungry and to obscure the Word of eternal life.

Someone might object to this criticism that the gospel demands that we show that we receive the love of Christ by loving our fellow Christians and our neighbors. It is true that the gospel insists on such a response. John wrote "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another" (1 John 4:10, 11). And this love must be shown in actions such as relieving the poor (1 John 3:16-18). But this is completely different from making our response to Christ's sacrifice *the same thing as* or even the *substitute for* that sacrifice, as the proposed liturgy in effect does.

An Old Liberal Practice

The perversion of the gospel which confronts us in this liturgy, although it is relatively new among us, is old in the history of the liberal ecumenical movement. Eight years ago Peter Beyerhaus published a little book, *Missions: Which Way? Humanization or Redemption*, which documented the way in which the World Council of Churches leadership had been perverting the Christian missionary program from bringing the gospel, to materialistic social service and even political revolution. As he stated, "The understanding of mission emerging from the theology of secularization does not really want nor even attempt to ground itself biblically. References to the Bible are sporadic and arbitrary. The original meaning of Scripture is distorted" (p. 77). At this point a footnote quoted a sermon of Canon D. Webster, "We are now witnessing a spate of literature on mission which, even if quoting from the Bible, has either reversed or ignored at least some of the biblical perspectives and priorities. The world's agenda is being allowed to take precedence over the Bible's message, and what the world says of itself is not being supplemented by what the Bible says of the world."

This liturgical material to promote the new world hunger program which our denomination's committee suggests our churches use in their worship is a striking example of just such distortion of "the meaning of Scripture," of reversing or ignoring "biblical perspectives and priorities" as Peter Beyerhaus deplored. It distorts or displaces not some important secondary doctrine, but the central doctrine of Christ's atonement. Such "promotion" as this forecasts no good either for the church itself or for its program of helping the poor. ●



LESSONS FROM GENESIS 1 TO 11

Henry Vander Kam

With a view to planning for future Bible study outlines the Board asks each society or Bible study group which is using our outlines for its study to inform us of this fact. If there are suggestions regarding subjects for future Bible studies these would be appreciated.

CAIN AND ABEL

Lesson 7

Genesis 4:1-7

The first three chapters of Genesis form the background for the understanding of all the rest of the Scriptures and of the whole history of the world. If these chapters were not historical we would have grave problems with the rest of the Bible and especially the way of salvation. However, the book of Genesis raises no doubts regarding the historicity of these chapters. The basic problem in our time is not found in the area of interpretation but, rather, in the view of Scripture! Having given the history of creation and of the fall of man the author naturally goes on to inform us concerning the history of man after the fall. There is no abrupt change between the last part of chapter three and chapter four. No wonder that those who began with a denial of the historicity of the first three chapters soon had to add eight more to this list. If Adam and Eve were not historical persons it would be difficult to maintain the historicity of the persons, Cain and Abel.

No children were born in Paradise. Adam and Eve had indeed received the command to multiply while they were in the garden and surely they would have been obedient to that command before the fall, but no child was born. This gives the impression that the time between their creation and the fall into sin may have been quite brief. Chapter four begins with the birth of the first children. "And the man knew Eve his wife; and she conceived and bare Cain." That is the manner in which the history of man after the fall is introduced. The generation of man is placed in a different light than that of animals. With man there is a deep love relationship between the man and his wife. He *knew* her. It is not only a physical union, but a union of the two persons. The Bible speaks with great chastity and accuracy regarding this union. Then she conceived and bore a son. Eve recognized this child as a gift of God and said: "I have gotten a man with the help of Jehovah." What an experience for her! She is the first one to experience the miracle of the birth of a child! A little life entrusted to her who had never seen a child before!

Does she have high hopes for this child? Undoubtedly she does. However, when some commentators teach that she already sees a fulfillment of the promise given in Genesis 3:15, i.e., that this one shall save them from the wretched condition which their sin has brought into the world, we would object that the text gives no warrant for this. No doubt she believes the promise given her but that does not mean that she believes this child is the one promised to crush the serpent's head. She has another child and calls his name Abel—vanity. Have her hopes already died? No, nor should we pour too much content into the meaning of the names given these children. Only when a name is given at the command of God does it have special meaning, but the names given by parents, either in early times or later, have not that special meaning because no parent can predict the future. Besides, did Adam and Eve speak Hebrew? Remember, this was centuries before Babel.

Both of the sons of Adam and Eve are engaged in perfectly legitimate pursuits. Cain becomes a tiller of the ground and Abel is a keeper of small cattle. What else is there for them to do? The difference in occupation must be borne in mind to understand the offerings they bring later.

The history which Genesis gives us of Cain and Abel is brief. Nothing is said about their childhood or their growing years. All the emphasis is placed on the one episode which has so much bearing on future history. Cain brings an offering to Jehovah of the produce of the ground. This is natural and legitimate. The very fact that an offering is brought reveals to us that he realizes from whence his blessings come and that he brings a gift to the Giver. Abel too brings an offering. He brings an offering of his flock. Again, very natural and legitimate. Of Abel we read that he brought of the *firstlings* and of the *fat* while of Cain we do not read anything comparable to this. But, both bring their gifts to Jehovah.

We find no record prior to this time that a command had been given to bring offerings to God. Perhaps such a command had been given which is not recorded, or that the bringing of offerings was natural to man while he still stood so close to the time of the garden of Eden. We must not use the standards of the Mosaic legislation, which came so much later, to judge the offerings of Cain and Abel. The fact that the one may have been bloody while the other, from the nature of the case, could not be bloody, did not determine acceptability or unacceptability of either offering. The offerings were brought for the purpose of expressing gratitude to their God and seeking His blessing on future labors.

The difference in the offerings of Cain and Abel is not found in the things they offer, nor in the ritual observed, but in the reception of the offerings. God had respect unto Abel and his offering but unto Cain and his offering he had not respect. Not only is the offering of the one accepted and the other rejected, but the person of the one is accepted and the other is not. Why is this so? Because the persons themselves are here involved in the acceptance or non-acceptance and not the offerings only, we are already pointed to Hebrews 11:4. The mere fact that a person brings offerings to God does not make him acceptable. Abel offers his sacrifice *by faith*, and Cain doesn't! That is the heart of the matter. Because Abel brings his offering from the heart, he, and his offering, are accepted. According to all outward appearances, Cain does the same thing Abel does, but He who sees the heart of man accepts the one and not the other. Jehovah does not need the offering because all the wealth of the universe is His. He wants the heart of the giver!

Cain became very angry when he realized that his offering had not been accepted. His countenance fell—it became evident at a glance that he was angry. But, the question arises: How did he know that his offering had not been accepted? Various fanciful interpretations have been given. There are still those who believe that fire descended from heaven and consumed Abel's offering but not Cain's. Others believe that the smoke of Abel's offering went straight up and the smoke of Cain's did not. None of these views can be based on the text. How then did he know? Of Abel the writer to the Hebrews writes that by his sacrifice "he had witness borne to him that he was righteous." He left the place of sacrifice with the assurance that his God had accepted him, that he was righteous and that he could go his way rejoicing. Cain had none of these. He brought his offering and left the place of sacrifice empty! Should not this empty feeling have spurred him to repentance? Of course, if sin were not irrational it would have done exactly that. However, the nature of sin is here clearly revealed. That he was not accepted was his own fault—but he became angry with the one who was accepted! Sin is shown and described in many different ways in the Scriptures later, but here we are already shown its strange nature.

Even though neither Cain nor his offering have been acceptable to Jehovah, He speaks to Cain. He

does not desire that this man shall continue in sin and fall victim to its full terror, as he will if it is unchecked. God spoke directly to Adam and Eve and seems to speak to Cain in the same way. The Lord is warning Cain. He was not accepted when he brought his offering because he did not bring it with a true heart—not in faith. Why is he now angry? Will this not lead him to sin more and more? Is there no way by which he may be accepted? Let him do well. In New Testament language—let him repent. Let him then bring worthy offerings and, as he will then be accepted, his countenance will be lifted up because the heart will no longer be empty. It is a gracious invitation to return! Let not sin go unconfessed and grow and fester! Repent and forsake sin.

Having urged Cain to go in the way he should go, the Lord warns him of the grave dangers if he does not repent. If he does not do well things will not remain as they are, but will become far worse. Sin doesn't stand still—it grows! It is here pictured as a wild beast crouching at the door, ready to devour. He has sinned—his offering was sin—therefore it was not accepted. This has angered him—but let him take heed—far worse is still to come if he does not turn away from the first sin. Sin is crouching at the door, ready to spring, and its desire is to ruin you completely. Let the experience of your parents teach you! Eve listened to the serpent; she looked longingly at the tree; she ate and gave her husband and they have loosed a flood of evil on the earth! The offering was not accepted because it could not be accepted. Repent and bring an offering with an obedient heart. If you don't, sin will be loosed on you like a wild beast and will slay you!

God commands him: "Do thou rule over it." These words present us with various difficulties. Are we able to rule over our sins or has sin become the master whose slaves we are? Paul complains that he doesn't do the things he wishes to do and does those things he doesn't want to do as a believer. Hasn't man then become helpless before the attacks of sin? Yet, Cain is commanded to rule over sin. We must understand these words in the light of the figure which is used. Sin, pictured as a wild beast, is crouching at the door waiting for the best opportunity. God does not speak here, first of all, of the sinful heart nor of all the various powers of sin, because man is not able to conquer or "rule over" those. He is here warning him not to open himself wide to the lurking temptations. Later we are taught "lead us not into temptation." We mustn't seek that temptation ourselves! Cain must learn to be afraid of sin—also because of its destructive power. But—he doesn't listen—and sin reveals what it can do!

Questions for discussion:

1. Why are some scholars eager to dispute the historicity of the first chapters of Genesis? Does the Bible assume the historicity of Cain and Abel? See Matt. 23:35; Luke 11:50; Heb. 11:4; 12:24; 1 John 3:12 and Jude 11.
2. What does it mean to bring an offering to God? Do we worship with our offerings? Does the value of our offering have any significance? Explain.

3. How can a person really know whether or not he is accepted of God? Does this knowledge belong to the experiential?
4. Is it sensible to be angry at another for one's own sin? Is it common?
5. Can we rule over sin, and, if so, how and over which sins? ●

CAIN'S SIN AND ITS RESULT.

Lesson 8

Genesis 4:8-16

God has given Cain ample warning concerning the dangerous state in which he finds himself. His anger because of the rejection of himself and his offering is able to plunge him into ever greater sin if he does not repent. He should be fully aware of the perils in the way and rule over the lurking evil.

However, Cain has not listened to the divine warning. He allows the evil to fester and grow. Instead of ruling over the evil, he allows the evil to rule him completely. Cain speaks to Abel. The original text does not inform us of what was said. Some versions have "aided" the text by adding the words: Let us go out to the field. It may very well be that Cain spoke such words to his brother but, we should note, the text doesn't include the conversation. The older versions place the words not found in the original in italics. But, the important thing is that they go out into a field, away from others, and Cain attacks his brother and kills him! This is the second *recorded* sin and it is indeed a grievous sin. Adam and Eve have disobeyed, thus bringing sin into the world. The floodgates have thereby been opened and a criminal act now takes place in their own family circle! It is not only murder, but fratricide—the killing of one's own brother! Abel becomes the first in a long list of martyrs. His faith and his godliness are the objects of the murderous hatred of Cain. Eve has given birth to both the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent! How the parental hearts must have bled when they were made aware of what had taken place! How Satan has deceived them! He had promised them that they would be as God if they would listen to him and now, in the next generation, they saw their eldest son falling to a sub-human level!

God seeks out Cain and speaks to him. He asks: "Where is Abel thy brother?" This question is not asked, of course, to obtain information but to make Cain aware of the fact that his deed is known to God and to confront him with the crime which has been committed. Cain answers arrogantly. At least, when Adam and Eve were confronted by the sin they had committed, there was a humble spirit even though they came with excuses. Not so Cain. He seeks to cover his crime with the lie: I don't know where he is! As though this lie is not enough, he even dares to inform God that he takes no responsibility for his brother. "Am I my brother's keeper?" He assumes the attitude: I am not to be questioned concerning the whereabouts or the welfare of my brother. He is to look out for himself!

God does not give a reply to the rude and arrogant speech of Cain but at once deals with the crime which has been committed. "What hast thou done?" Admit it now! It is known to Him who sees all things. The blood of Abel is crying from the ground, on which it has been spilled, to God for justice to be shown. Cain may consider that blood to be of little value but God, the Giver of life, considers it precious. The death of Abel has not gone unnoticed and the Judge of all the earth will do right. Abel is dead—but he still speaks (Heb. 11:4). Cain thought that the slaying of his brother Abel would remove the source of his unhappiness and anger but he now hears that that blood has not been silenced. (Heb. 12:24) He will now learn that a second sin does not root out the first one but makes it a thousand times worse.

The sentence is now pronounced upon Cain. Note that his life is not taken from him even though he had deserved capital punishment. It is only later—in the days of Noah and in the days of Moses that capital punishment is required when a murder has been committed. Nevertheless, the punishment is severe. The curse is pronounced on *him*. In chapter three the serpent was cursed and the ground too, but not Adam and Eve. Cain is to bear the curse himself. The ground had been cursed so that it would no longer produce its fruit with the ease it did before the fall and that thorns and thistles would now grow too. But, this curse becomes even more severe in regard to Cain. Adam could still wrestle a living from the ground by the sweat of his brow. But, when Cain tills the ground "it shall not henceforth yield unto thee its strength." He will not be able to make a living. Therefore he will wander from place to place. "A fugitive and a wanderer shalt thou be in the earth." What a life is in prospect for this man! No place of permanent residence.

Cain immediately realizes the severity of this punishment. There is no spirit of repentance for what he has done but he complains that he will not be able to bear the punishment! Doesn't the punishment fit the crime? He fully realizes that the earth will no longer be kind to him by giving its produce in answer to his labor. Graphically he pictures what will happen to him. God, he says, has driven him from the face of the earth. "And from thy face shall I be hid." God had made no mention of this last matter. However, Cain seems to realize that this would naturally be involved. God will have nothing to do with him anymore, he believes. Suddenly it seems that he will consider this a great loss. That was not the impression left when he first replied to God!

When he has become a fugitive and a wanderer in the earth he is afraid that anyone who finds him will slay him. These words have given rise to many different interpretations. Who would he be afraid of? Who else populated the world in his day? Some have taught that there were other people on the earth besides the family of Adam and Eve. Others believe that Adam and Eve were not the first people but that there were pre-Adamites. The book of Genesis, however, does not allow this kind of interpretation.

But, the question still remains: Who is he afraid of, because who else is living on the earth? We must never lose sight of the fact that the Bible generally, and the book of Genesis in particular, does not give a *complete*, that is, a detailed history of men and of nations. We are informed of the birth of Cain and Abel and the one episode in their life which will be of significance for all future history. We are not to conclude from this that Adam and Eve had only these two children until the time that Seth was born. In Gen. 5:4 we read that Adam was the father of sons and daughters. Because of the long life given to man in the early history of the world the families were very large and that was very likely the case with our first parents. The fear of Cain for his own life becomes very real. Those whom he may meet in his wandering over the earth are *related* to him and they will know what he had done! Not only will they have knowledge of it but they also will have personal interest in it! If a murderer of their own relative, Abel, is allowed to live, they may be tempted to avenge his blood and take the law into their own hands. It is, therefore, no imaginary fear that grips Cain's heart.

The disobedience of our first parents drove them out of the garden of Eden. The sin of their firstborn virtually drives him from the earth! How quickly sin "progresses." It is but one step from disobedience to murder. Sin, that wild beast which was crouching at the door, has made its leap and has destroyed the first two children of Adam and Eve. It cost Abel's life and Cain's soul!

How does a murderer dare plead for mercy? There is not a word of repentance nor an indication that he now realizes what a monstrous crime he has committed, but only a numbing fear of punishment! His life will indeed lie under the curse and he is beginning to realize what that means. He had no mercy toward Abel—but don't let others do to me what I have done to my brother! He slew his brother without cause but others will have reason enough to slay him. Sin is not only irrational, it is also cowardly. These things have been written for our benefit too so that we may be able to see the destructive power of sin and flee it—and rule over it!

This cry of fear by Cain does not go unanswered. God is still willing to listen to him. There is a certain measure of mercy shown him in the beginning that his life is not claimed in payment for the life of his brother. However, this "mercy" is weakened by the severe punishment meted out to him so that it becomes a question whether the life which is spared is now worth living. But, when he now cries out in fear that, though God has spared him, he may still lose his life at the hands of others, the Lord gives him assurance that this will not happen. It is amazing that a person such as Cain can still find mercy. But, very early in the history of the human race we are already introduced to the mercy of our God.

God will spread His protection over Cain. Should anyone seek to slay Cain, a sevenfold vengeance shall be taken on him. This "sevenfold" means that the vengeance shall be complete. This statement can serve to encourage Cain but it is of course not speak-

ing of a preventative. He now goes farther and gives a sign to Cain for his protection. Many are the guesses which have been made as to the nature of this sign. So many proceed on the assumption that a sign was put on Cain himself. The test does not say this and such a sign would do more to attract attention to him than to prevent someone hurting him. We are not told what that sign was but it was given to him to assure him of divine protection. Such signs were given different individuals in later history — God gave signs to Moses, Gideon, Saul, etc.

Cain now leaves the presence of God to begin his wandering as a fugitive over the face of the earth. The location of the land of Nod, in which he dwells, is unknown to us but it is east of Eden. The family of Adam and Eve seem to have settled in the proximity of the garden of Eden—but there is no place here anymore for the firstborn son who wanders over the

earth and finds that the earth which has drunk in his brother's blood refuses to give him food!

Questions for discussion:

1. Is it not somewhat unnatural that Cain should have become so angered that he killed his own brother? Or isn't it? Explain.
2. Are we our brother's keeper? If so what does that involve?
3. Why isn't Cain put to death for this sin of murder, whereas God demands this punishment for this sin in Gen. 9:6?
4. What does it mean when a man is cursed of God (vs. 11)?
5. Adam lived 930 years. Could there have been a sizeable population in the world at the time of his death?
6. Is this history of Cain and Abel of much importance to us today? Explain. ●

HUSBAND AND WIFE: THE SEXES IN SCRIPTURE AND SOCIETY . . . a critique

Paul Ingeneri

The Bible teaches us plainly that although God makes men and women equal before Him (Gal. 3:28) He has not designed that their role in society be identical. He said that the man was to lead as "head" (1 Cor. 11:3; 1 Tim. 2:8-3:2). Today many professing Christians who support the popular "women's liberation" movement resent this teaching of God's Word and seek plausible excuses for rejecting it. Paul Ingeneri, Director of Education and Evangelism for the Seymour Christian Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Mich., and a student at Calvin Seminary, finds an example of this kind of argument in an important new book. Mr. Ingeneri was also the speaker at the Reformed Fellowship annual meeting, October 4, in Grand Rapids.

This article is really a partial review of a book with this title. It is partial because one can in no way do justice to a book of some 200 pages in a review of only a few pages and because my focus is limited mostly to the 55 page section entitled "A Biblical Critique of Traditional Sex Roles."

"A Calvin College Production"

The book comes with a 79 copyright and is written by Peter DeJong and Donald R. Wilson, Calvin College professors of sociology and anthropology respectively. It integrates biological, social-scientific, and Biblical evidence to (according to the jacket) "present a well-reasoned perspective on the issue of sex roles" and is really intended as a textbook for "marriage and family courses as well as sociology and social issues classes." In light of the

above authorship, claims, and intentions for use, the book merits our close scrutiny.

Gen 2 - "straw men" and an "oversight"

After a brief introduction of the authors' principles of interpretation the relationship of males and females in creation and the fall is discussed. The conclusions drawn from Gen. 1 seem fair enough if not stretched. It is in Gen. 2 and 3 however that we begin to find difficulties. In discussing the possibility of a connotation of man's headship implied in the word "helper" in 2:18, the authors apparently felt they need not give attention at this time to Paul's inspired comments on this verse which are found in 1 Cor. 11:3, 8, 9 - presumably finding greater value in Clarence Vos' word study of "helper." The authors put forth the typical "straw man" as well . . . "The question is whether or not this concept in any sense denotes someone of lesser quality or ability." Now, even the staunchest conservative does not believe that women are of lesser quality or ability and though the above quoted view may be traditional with some it is far from conservative.

Moving on to 2:23, it is interesting to note that Adam's naming of the animals is mentioned but not man's naming of the woman. Why this oversight? Could it be because in Hebrew thought name-giving is the prerogative of one in authority? In their handling of this verse also the "straw man" is again dragged out. . . "This (naming of the animals) is thought by some to indicate, or at least imply, that the male was created with greater intellectual ability than the female." Think of the effect when these weak arguments are paraded before our college students as typical arguments of the opponents of the "progressives." Throughout this section, other poor arguments and interpretations and provocative phrases such as "dominant-subordinate" and

"superior-inferior" are set down as representative of traditional views based on the verses in question. We should note too that many view traditional and conservative as one and the same.

Headship does not cancel interdependence and mutuality

In discussing Gen. 2:21-24 overall, the authors conclude that it is only a chronological rendering implying mutuality and interdependence (which it does) but supplying no thought of headship.

Yet the creation order is not merely a chronological rendering, as Paul shows us, and it does imply a normative headship principle. In I Cor. 11:8, 9 (part of Paul's inspired commentary on this passage of Gen. 2) we see that the Lord is concerned not only with chronology but with origin... an origin that implies headship. "Man does not originate (come from) woman, but woman from man; for indeed man was not created for the woman's sake, but woman for the man's sake." The beautiful interdependence described in Gen. 2:23, 24 is also echoed by Paul in I Cor. 11:11, 12 yet with no indication that this mutuality cancels the headship implied in Gen. 2 which Paul has just strongly reaffirmed in I Cor. 11:3, 8, 9.

Gen. 3 - the fall, the curse, and more "straw men"

On approaching Gen. 3 with their view that Gen. 2 implies only mutuality and interdependence, the authors are forced to the interpretation that "despotic tyranny or even loving headship" are both results of the fall and so the conservative arguments are made to look absurd...

"Certain details of this narrative suggest to some interpreters that a hierarchical relationship between man and woman existed prior to the fall and that because of the curse it changed from a kindly hierarchy into a despotic rule. One of these details is that the serpent tempted the woman rather than the man. Therefore the argument goes, she must have taken God's commands less seriously than her husband, or she was more vulnerable than he, or possibly she realized that her character was weaker than his and that by eating the fruit... she would raise herself to equality with him."

Compare the above caricature of conservative thinking with the presentation below based on Knight's *New Testament Teaching on the Role Relationship of Men and Women* (which is highly recommended):

Gen. 3 presumes that work, childbirth, and headship were "instituted" in Gen. 1 and 2

The order of authority that Paul discerns in Gen. 2 is assumed in Gen. 3. Gen. 3 presumes the reality of childbearing (Gen. 1:28) in which the woman will now experience the effects of the fall and sin (Gen. 3:16). It presumes the reality and dignity of work (Gen. 1:28; 2:15) in which man will now experience

the effects of the fall and sin (Gen. 3:17ff.) And it presumes the reality of interdependence and headship established by God's creation order (Gen. 2:18ff.) which will now also experience the effects of the fall and sin (Gen. 3:16). "He shall *rule* over you" expresses the effects of sin corrupting the relationship of husband (the head) and wife. Neither childbearing nor work nor headship are introduced here, but what are introduced are the effects of the fall on them.

And just as we try to eliminate pain in childbirth but not childbirth itself, and as we try to lessen the toil associated with work without discarding work itself, as somehow a result of the curse, we should try to eliminate tyranny, harshness, and oppressive rule in husband/wife - male/female relationships but not legitimate authority.

New Testament renewal of God's image in Christ includes headship

The authors try to buttress their argument with a statement to the effect that image renewal does away with any idea of headship relating to authority or final decision making... "Even a benign headship pattern should begin to change back to the egalitarian structure of creation." Yet in every NT passage dealing with image renewal in Christ and male-female role relationships in grace we find the apostles urging husbands to take their legitimate place as heads of their households (and using the strongest possible supports for this exhortation) while at the same time telling husbands to love and honor their wives and not be bitter toward them. (See Eph. 5:22ff., I Pet. 3:1ff., Col. 3:18, 19) Note further that the Bible never builds its case for the role relationship of men and women in marriage on the effects of sin (Gen. 3:16) but on the pre-fall creation order in Gen. 2. (See Eph. 5:31; I Cor. 11:8, 9; 14:34; I Tim. 2:13, 14) "In I Tim. 2:14 Paul does refer to the fall after citing the creation order, but he does this to show the serious consequences of reversing the creation order on this most historic and significant occasion." (quote from Knight)

A question for "progressives"

In the next section dealing with males and females in redemption it is stated that "the redemptive act of Christ was more than sufficient to counteract the results of Adam's sin in the world" and I Cor. 15 is one of the passages cited. This is of course true, but I often wonder what "progressives" do with vs. 28 of I Cor. 15 along with I Cor. 11:3. Do they feel that these verses about the father's enduring headship conflict with the Son's equality in the Godhead or the Son's eternal kingship (II Pet. 1:11) just as a husband's headship is said to conflict with the idea of male-female equality before God?

Overconcern with overarching themes and supposed author intent

The Eph. 5, Col. 3, and I Pet. 3 passages are dealt with in a way that clearly illustrates the relativism lurking near the surface in the authors' presenta-

tion. After rejecting various views of headship and never coming to grips with a well stated conservative view, an interpretation is proposed which is said to be "more consistent with the broader context of the passage." In a nutshell, the authors find the grand theme of unity to be the context of these three passages and in relating them to this theme certain norms to be found in the vss. disappear as certainly as chaff from wheat during winnowing. One of the dangers that conservatives are aware of...this overconcern with and misuse of overarching themes and supposed author intent to the detriment (really the death and burial) of plainly stated principles is clearly illustrated by the following quotes from the book.

"The basic message of these three passages is not that there is a God-ordained timeless hierarchy of authority between husbands and wives, parents and children, and slaves and masters but conservatives don't believe this of the latter - see I Cor. 7:21) but that (and the authors seem to say *only that*) a selfless service orientation and an affirmation of the worth of all persons is required in order to achieve unity in the body of Christ. This interpretation maintains that these three passages cannot be used to support the notion of a God-ordained division of authority between any of the relationships listed... Any argument for a division of authority must be established on the basis of other Biblical passages not these... The problem is how to unite those with different amounts of authority based on their culturally assigned social roles."

Relativistic affirmations and forced interpretations

We might quickly counter the above thinking with the comment that the parental authority of Eph. 6:1-4 is grounded in one of the ten commandments and these commandments are certainly not cultural assignments. Also the husband's headship (Eph. 5) is analogous to the Lord's headship of the Church which is likewise neither temporary nor culturally assigned. The authors are ready, however, with more relativistic affirmations... "Because of the many connotations of 'head' the interpretation it is given in the context of the man-woman relationship is largely a matter of the interpreter's preferences as well as his basic sociological orientation." I ask though... Is this really very far from my humanistic grad school professors telling me that all is relative but what they say is truth?

More on "head"

The word "head" in I Cor. 11:3 is then dealt with and its definition/interpretation is split three ways by the authors. The first (headship of Christ over man) is said to be "a priority of rule;" the second (headship of husband/man over wife/woman) is designated a "priority of time;" and the third set (headship of God over Christ) - a "priority of logical relationship." Certainly this is an interpretation totally

forced onto the text. The authors admit an element of authority in the first set... we have already shown previously that striking authority from the second set and interpreting I Cor. 11:8, 9 as merely a chronology (along with Gen. 2) is invalid... and when it seems obvious there is also an authority aspect in the third set based on Christ's many statements of total submission to the Father's will, we are told that this headship is only a priority of logical relationship.

Any room for the Holy Spirit?

Two more comments on headship by the authors lead us to ask what place they see the Holy Spirit taking in the creation of God's Word. These quotations show us (by contrast) the importance of holding to inerrant Scriptures in which the authors do not err (because they are not merely working with the best *human* source of information available).

In nonmodern societies - *which were of course the only ones Paul knew* - the male characteristically has more contacts with social units outside the immediate family... and the decisions he makes that affect the family he makes by virtue of this representative role... It is doubtful then that Paul saw an inevitable association between being the husband and being the head.

One major problem for interpreters of the Bible has been Paul's references to Gen. 1 and 2, which speak of males and females *in a way that appears to be foreign to the creation account*. For instance, in I Cor. 11:1-15 Paul seems to suggest, on the basis of Gen. 2, that there is a hierarchical relationship between males and females; but when we examine Gen. 2, such an idea does not appear to be there at all... One of the ways of handling this is to claim that Paul understood the creation account better than we are able to, and that our inability to see there what Paul sees merely indicates his greater exegetical prowess... *but to claim the OT contains a viewpoint that we cannot detect undermines our confidence in our ability to understand what Scripture says*.

The quotations suggest two questions: First, Is Paul merely a commentator on the OT text in the same way that we are? Don't we believe that Paul's writings are Divinely inspired? Secondly, (even if I did agree with the author's claim that "Paul's interpretation seems foreign to the OT text - which I don't) there are several comments made by NT authors on OT texts that we find surprising and unexpected. Do we then say they are wrong because we probably would not have come up with the same interpretations they did? Don't we have to recognize their inspiration in such cases? Although the authors try to ground their argumentation in the principle that the Bible should be understandable by the average reader, as I examine the texts I can't find any basis there for many of their understandings of them.

An authority grounded in flux

There is some mention of "legitimate authority" in the book but this is rooted only in "a pattern of task allocation between males and females that is the result of their created reproductive differences." Dare we ask who made them different or what happens to this "legitimate authority" when a couple has no children and both work — the wife not being "tied" to the smaller social arena of the home?

Several pages later the authors answer this second question and show that their concept of "legitimate authority" is grounded in the shallow sands of social flux . . . "It should be recognized that the male headship (representative) role that Paul speaks of is becoming less and less of a functional necessity in American society as women's social participation becomes less limited by their reproductive role."

Slavery is different!

Clearly husband-wife relationships are seen by the authors as on an exact par with master-slave relationships . . . not permanent and only regulated or "put up with" so that the spread of the gospel would not be hindered. But Peter and Paul see nothing of this kind of parity . . . Paul tells slaves that if they can get free to do so (I Cor 7:21) but neither apostle ever speaks to wives in a similar manner! On the contrary, they tell them to be submissive to their husbands as the Church to her Lord and not to try to exercise authority over the man. They then ground these directives not in some idea of the then present socially assigned task-allocation, which are subject to change, nor in reproductive differences, considerably muted today by day-care and bottle feeding, but in the Father's headship of Christ, the law, the creation order, and the commandment of the Lord. The question in all of this is clearly one of the authority of God's word and not one of the cultural baggage we bring to our interpretations or any inherent tension in Scripture resulting from the Apostles' supposed playing of both sides of the fence in order to achieve unity and further the gospel proclamation.

Conclusions and questions

Though the authors' arguments throughout justly wreak havoc with an Archie Bunker mentality, they often do not deal fairly or even come to grips with any intelligently stated conservative position on the issues at hand.

But can the Calvin College student discern this . . . when using this book as a text in the classroom under the influence of a "progressive" professor, and under pressure to accept his presentation in order to get a satisfactory grade.

Or further, can we as a denomination continue to stand if we keep hacking away at our biblical foundations while pulling notions of "legitimate authority" out of relativistic hats?

Hopefully the publication of texts like the one reviewed here will arouse the CRC conservative from his lethargy and force him to deal with these critical questions. ●

THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST

Christ — Our Chief Prophet

Jerome M. Julien

Having seen the general teaching of Scripture about the offices of Christ we should look at each one of them in detail.

First, we call Christ "our chief Prophet and Teacher."

What is a prophet?

We must distinguish between the precise meaning of the word "prophet" and the common, loose use of the word.

Loosely used, a prophet is one who speaks of the future. Jeanne Dixon is called a modern prophet by some because she predicts the future. Even in the church the word "prophet" is used in a similar way: prophetic preaching speaks of the future — the events to come, we are told.

According to the Bible, however, a prophet does not tell of the future exclusively. Oh, he tells of the future, but always in the context of the Kingdom of God. His task is to speak the Word of God. Therefore, prophetic preaching is the proclamation of the Gospel of the Kingdom and the application of that Gospel to every part of life, present as well as future.

The word "prophet" portrays this in a very colorful way. Our actual word "prophet" comes from two Greek words which literally mean "to talk for." This English word we always use to translate a Hebrew word used in the Old Testament. However, the Hebrew word is far more colorful than simply: "to talk for." The Hebrew word which we translate "prophet" means "to boil up, to boil forth, as a fountain." Further, it implies that this boiling comes because of an outside influence. Perhaps we could say that it is like a boiling produced by fire under a kettle of water (Jeremiah 20:9). The prophet is a man who is moved and affected by the inspiration of God. His boiling does not come by his own power. He is moved by God!

When God called Moses to go back to Egypt so that Israel could be brought out of bondage, Moses objected, saying, "Lord, I am not eloquent . . ." (Exodus 4:10). Jehovah answered, "I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt speak . . ." (Exodus 4:12). And Moses was a great prophet (Deuteronomy 34:10)!

Thus, a prophet has more to do than tell when to expect the end, or the so-called rapture. The prophet is filled with the knowledge of God and His will. Before the Fall, Adam possessed this kn

edge. After the Fall, this knowledge was given to God's servants the prophets. They knew; therefore, they spoke. Amos could come with his harsh words: "You are not heeding God's commands." Elijah could speak with the Truth that hurts! They spoke because they were empowered by the Holy Spirit. Having eaten, as it were, the Word of God, it became a fire in their bones! Being in subjection to that Word, they could do nothing but speak God's Truth as it related to the past, present and the future. As prophets they spoke of God, His covenant, His kingdom, His will. They spoke in His name as friend-servants of God.

It is in this context that we speak of Christ as our Chief Prophet. The tasks of the prophets all "meet, and that in a singular and eminent manner, in Christ our Prophet. Matt. 5:21, etc.; John 1:18..." (John Flavel, *The Fountain of Life*, p. 99). Of Him the prophets had been speaking all along. When He came, the last prophet, John the Baptist, said, "He must increase; I must decrease" (John 3:30). The Chief Prophet had come personally in the fulness of time to dwell among us and speak with us face to face.

As our Chief Prophet He was doing His substitutionary work as the Last Adam. If He was to be our Savior, He had to praise God as Adam was to do. To do this He had to know and praise God in harmony with the Law. This *we* failed to do through sin. However, all through His life *He* did do as God commanded.

But Christ's work as prophet was even more detailed. Not only was He to know and praise God according to the Law, He was also to reveal God to sinful man as the merciful, gracious and forgiving Savior. And that is just what He does! That is why Jesus would read about Himself from Isaiah 61:1 in the synagogue: "Jehovah hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek..." Twice the Lord sealed Him to this office by owning Christ by the voice from heaven (Matthew 3:17, 17:5). Even His enemies were forced to acknowledge of Him, "Never man so spake" (John 7:46).

What a wealth we have in our Chief Prophet "in whom are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hidden" (Col. 2:3). He is "the Way, the Truth and the Life" (John 14:6), "the Light of the World" (John 8:12), "the True and faithful witness" (Revelation 3:14); He spoke "the words of eternal life" (John 6:68).

His work is to reveal to us God and His whole will. He said, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father" (John 14:9). To see the Father we must be enlightened. This enlightening is an opening of the heart.

When Jesus joined the two men on the road to Emmaus on Resurrection Day evening we read, "Then opened he their mind, that they might understand the scriptures" (Luke 24:45). John Flavel wrote: "The mind is to the heart as the door to the house: What comes into the heart, comes in through the understanding..." (*The Fountain of Life*, p. 113). Similarly, we read about Lydia, that the Lord opened her heart (Acts 16:14).

This opening of the heart and enlightening of the understanding is the work of our Chief Prophet through the Holy Spirit.

For this He makes deaf ears to hear. By His Word and Spirit He makes God known to us until that knowledge becomes a fire in our bones, too. Then, we confess, "And we know that 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" (I John 5:20).

So that we know God's Truth, the Word is preached. Men called of God to be, as it were, prophets, bring the Word in its fulness, and the Holy Spirit does the work needful so that we may truly hear. Romans 10:13 and 14 in the *American Standard Version* expounds this truth so well: "whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?"

How important, then, is that Word of God preached right now! Through its application we grow. True, sometimes it hurts terribly. Yet, this action of the prophetic Word is necessary. And so we hear, "Incline your ear and come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live" (Isaiah 55:3). "And it shall be that every soul that shall not hearken to that prophet, shall be utterly destroyed from among the people" (Deuteronomy 18:19). Then, our prayer becomes;

Teach me, O Lord, Thy way of truth, . . .
Give me an understanding heart. ●

Meditation

DAVID AND GOLIATH

John Blankespoor

As the Philistine moved closer to attack him, David ran quickly toward the battle line to meet him. Reaching into his bag and taking out a stone, he slung it and struck the Philistine on the forehead. The stone sank into his forehead and he fell facedown on the ground. I Sam. 17:48, 49.

We all know the story so well. Children like to hear it told again and again, and adults as well. What a dramatic story! I can just imagine that when that great moment of the crisis was there, all was quiet, both in the camp of the Philistines and of the Israelites. Perhaps some even closed their eyes, not wanting to see the butchery and slaughtering of this teenager by this mighty giant.

Of course, it's the size and equipment of these two men that enters the picture and makes it seem so ridiculous for David. Perhaps Goliath was still a

remnant of the Anakim of whom we read previously in the Bible. Joshua had almost wiped them out, but not completely. Here at least is one left. His height was approximately nine and a half feet. His coat of armor weighed some two hundred pounds. He must have worn it with comfort. The handle alone of his spear weighed twenty-five pounds. Add to that that he had one going before him with a shield for his protection. And then you see that young, small David. As a Jewish boy he likely was not more than five feet tall, perhaps not even that much. Wonder what kind of sling shot he had. As a boy I often wished I knew.

Ever wonder why this story is in the Bible? What does it tell us and mean for us who live centuries later?

Necessary it is for us to see that Goliath stands for and represents the powers of the world, and the enemies of the church. David and Israel are the people of God. The Goliaths of the world are always out to destroy the people of God. the Heidelberg Catechism speaks of our mortal enemies, out for the kill. They are the devil, the world, and our own sinful flesh. Sometimes these Goliaths can be easily recognized, as for example, in time of persecution; but they also come as angels of light, when people don't recognize them readily. They come in the form of apostasy, false doctrine, secularism, humanism, materialism, and other "isms."

They are called Goliaths. Why? Because they are so big, so strong, and apparently invincible. And over against them the Davids of the church are always so small and weak. And their cause seems to be so hopeless. From a mere human viewpoint, what chance does David have? The "match" simply is ridiculous, it doesn't add up at all. What nonsense!

The first important requirement is that we see the Goliaths of our age, that we recognize them for what they really are, that today, too, they try to swallow up the church alive (Ps. 124). Parents must see this, children must see this, but also the leaders in the church.

But don't we see these "uneven sides" in all of the history of the church? How mighty Egypt was and how hopeless the cause of the church seemed when God's people were enslaved by these cruel dictators! How hopeless the cause must have seemed to Deborah when Sisera came down the hills with nine hundred chariots and galloping trained war-horses over against the Israelites who as foot soldiers had only bows and arrows in their hands? What chance of survival was there for Hezekiah when Jerusalem was surrounded by 185,000 Assyrians? The Bible is full of these apparent inequities and hopeless situations. And when the Lord Jesus Christ appeared on the scene of history the Goliaths of that day had it all but won. How can a root and tree grow out of dry ground? There are only a handful of Christians left, a few shepherds, Annas and Simeons. Where are the waiting masses? And the Devil comes with full force, through Herod immediately but also later when the land seems to have been filled with demon-

possessed people. One of them is even called Legion. What a pitiful victim he is!

The victory, of course, is the Lord's. And He is the victorious Lord today.

Of Him David is a type and shadow.

It is the *faith* of David that we must see here. How beautiful is his confession and testimony. And all that from a mere teenager. What first of all really disturbed this young man was the defiance of Goliath, and mockery of the God of Israel. Blessed is the church that has such young people. And then that faith expresses itself so beautifully when David says to Goliath, "This day the Lord will hand you over to me." Notice, he says that God will do it. Also that the battle is the Lord's. This means that there is no doubt about the outcome. And as he approaches Goliath, David doesn't say to himself, I'm going to take a chance, or, I'm going to do my best, or, perhaps it will turn out all right if I can throw this stone hard enough and straight enough. No, he is *convinced* of the victory before he takes one step towards the giant.

Try to imagine the situation in the crucial moment. This godly teenager has in his heart the positive assurance of the victory. He says, "I will." There was no doubt about it in his mind or heart. With firm assurance he slings the stone. Later Paul expressed such faith in the beautiful words, "We know." O yes, they also had it already in the Old Testament. Job knew that his redeemer lived. When one has that inner conviction he already has the victory. In fact that is the victory of the Spirit of God in us.

Today we have so much more than what David had. We know that Christ the great David, has come. He has overcome. He is Lord in heaven today, the Lord of the church of believers. This church faces the Goliaths of our day. According to all human standards her cause is not only weak, but ridiculous and hopeless. But if she is a living church she knows that the friendship of the world is enmity with God. This living church is a battling church. She truly sings, Onward Christian Soldiers, and also, Stand up, stand up for Jesus. And she knows that His cause and promises shall not fail.

Of course, God uses means. He could have caused Goliath to drop dead from a heart attack. But no, He uses the means of a slingshot and a stone coming from that heart of faith of young David. We must assume our responsibilities. Warriors we must be. As parents we must teach and be examples for our children in this warfare. But always with the faith in the promises of our victorious Lord. Being such soldiers, trusting in Him and loving Him, we can face any and every Goliath. Finally we face the last great enemy, death. Again, according to all odds, all human calculations and what the eye sees this is the end and we are losing the battle. But this faith also then can say, "I KNOW." ●

BOOK NOTES

Jerome M. Julien

THE APOSTOLIC CHURCH, WHICH IS IT? by Thomas Witherow. Publications Committee of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, Glasgow, 1967. 91 pp. \$2.20, paper.

Written in 1856 by a pastor who later became a Professor of Ecclesiastical History, its purpose is that we "may know the scriptural grounds on which the Presbyterian form of church government rests."

CHRIST KNOCKING AT THE DOOR OF SINNERS' HEARTS, by John Flavel. Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1978. 400 pp. \$3.95, paper.

By means of twelve sermons on Revelation 3:20 and two on Romans 1:18, this

great Puritan preacher (died 1691) works out the theme of the subtitle of this volume: "A Solemn Entreaty To Receive The Saviour and His Gospel in This Day of Mercy." These sermons were preached in 1688-9.

THE LIFE OF REVEREND DAVID BRAINERD, CHIEFLY EXTRACTED FROM HIS DIARY, by Jonathan Edwards. Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1978. 360 pp. \$3.45, paper.

Brainerd, a son-in-law of Edwards, had a short life—only twenty-nine years. Nevertheless, he was a man useful to the Lord as he preached to the Indians on the American frontier. This volume based on his diary has had a great impact on Christians through the centuries since it was first published.

THE LIFE OF JOHN KNOX, by Thomas M'Crie. Free Presbyterian

Publications, Glasgow, 1976. 294 pp. \$7.50, paper.

By one of the best historians that Scotland has ever produced, this biography continues to be considered by many to be the very best on the Scottish Reformer. It presents Knox as the great leader that he was and yet as a human being. This volume had great impact on the founders of the Free Church.

EDUCATION FOR THE REAL WORLD, by Henry M. Morris. Creation-Life Publishers, San Diego, California, 1977. 192 pp. \$3.95, paper.

After laying out the Biblical principles of education, Morris points out the two kinds of education: humanistic and, he calls it, Christ-centered. He concludes by showing how Christian education can be implemented. He does not believe that Christian education is simply education with prayer and chapel.

OUR QUESTION BOX

"Was Christ Violent?"

Harlan Vanden Einde

A women's Bible study group in Kansas, in their study of Mark 11:15-18 (the cleansing of the temple by Jesus), came across the statement in their study material: "Jesus engages in the only act of violence recorded of Him." In view of Isaiah 53:9b, "he had done no violence," they wonder if the statement in their study material is too strong. Was that an act of violence on the part of Jesus? And if so, does that not contradict Isaiah 53:9b?

The incident referred to in Mark 11:15-18 is familiar to all readers, I'm sure. Our Lord was offended by the way in which the temple was being used, and He began "to cast out them that sold and bought" there, and "overthrew the tables of the money-changers, and the seats of them that sold doves." He condemned them for making the temple "a den of robbers," rather than using it as "a house of prayer" as it was intended.

It is not hard to imagine the righteous indignation of our Lord when He saw this sorry spectacle in the temple. It was one thing that this sacred temple should look and smell like a market-place, but even worse, there was fraud and dishonesty evident in the lucrative business being transacted. As sacrificial animals were sold and bought, and as foreign money was exchanged by pilgrims who had come from countries far away (since both the temple tax and certain rites of purification had to be paid in Jewish coin), there was abundant opportunity for cheating and dishonesty, and making a fast profit, often from unsuspecting people.

So the Lord drove them out! According to verse 16, He did not even allow them to carry their merchandise through the temple any more. For there were those who were using the temple as a short-cut from the city to the Mount of Olives.

Now, was this an act of violence on the part of our Lord? Or, more directly, is "violence" the proper word to describe His actions?

According to the dictionary, the word "violence" has a number of meanings. It can mean "physical force used so as to injure or damage; rough, injurious act." But it also has this meaning: "natural or physical energy or force in action; intensity; severity; great force or strength of feeling, conduct or language." We tend to think of the word "violence" more in terms of the first of these two meanings, such as "the vandals committed a violent act of destruction, and destroyed innocent people's property." That suggests the doing of an evil deed. But "violence" or "violent" is not always used in association with evil, any more than "anger" is always connected with evil. Do we not also say: "That is a violent contrast in colors," or "I have a violent pain"?

Confronted as our Lord was by these evil things that were taking place in the temple, He was filled with a righteous indignation or anger. He used His physical energy, and used it with intensity, and with strong feeling and emotion, as He over-turned their tables and drove them out. It was not an evil act that He was committing, but He was acting against evil with intensity. And in line with the second definition given above, I believe we may describe that with the word "violence."

But what of Isaiah 53:9b? Checking the meaning of the Hebrew word used there, we find that it means violence in the sense of "wrong," such as injurious language or unjust treatment. Our Lord was (and is) not characterized by anything evil or malicious. The point of Isaiah's words is not to say that Jesus never harshly judged sin, or never reacted against evil with intensity, but that although He never did anything evil or wicked, He was nevertheless to make "his grave with the wicked" - He was to die the physical death of the sinner because He was dying as a substitute for sinners.

Remember, this is the Bible's glorious message: "Him who knew no sin he made to be sin on our behalf; that we might become the righteousness of God in him" (II Cor. 5:21).

Bearing shame and scoffing rude
In my place condemned He stood,
Sealed my pardon with His blood;
Hallelujah! What a Savior!

"Evolution — Fact Or Theory"

A reader from the mid-West writes in reference to an article in the April 1979 issue of the magazine *National Geographic*, in which the author writes about footprints that have been found "in the grey, petrified ash of the beds . . . We have found hominoid footprints that are remarkably similar to those of modern man . . . prints that in my opinion could only be left by an ancestor of man . . . prints that were laid down an incredible 3,600,000 years ago." And the reader asks: "What can we say about this? What then becomes of what we read in the Bible, that man is created in God's image?"

I have not read the article referred to in this reader's question, but I have read similar statements elsewhere. It must be remembered that the theory of evolution (and it is only a theory) requires extremely long periods of time if it is to have any plausibility, and so the evolutionist is constantly looking at the world from that perspective. Any scientific evidence which seems to put a disclaimer on the theory that it took millions of years for man as we know him to develop, is explained away by statements such as quoted above: "prints that in *my opinion* (italics mine, H.V.) could only be left by an ancestor of man."

Why would the evolutionist be so concerned to explain away those footprints as belonging to someone or something other than modern man? Because if these footprints of man are found to be in the same strata of rock as the prints of large, supposedly prehistoric animals, that proves that they existed at the same time, and then the theory of evolution is disproved.

John C. Whitcomb, Jr., and Henry M. Morris have co-authored a book entitled "The Genesis Flood," first published by the Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company in 1961, which has gone through numerous reprintings. (It is well worth purchasing for those interested in this subject). In chapter 5, they refer to this same matter about which this reader writes. Let me quote from page 172:

"... there is the case of the human footprints that have frequently been found in supposedly very ancient strata. Man, of course, is supposed to have evolved only in the late Tertiary, at the earliest, and therefore to be only about one million years old. But what appear to be human footprints have been found in rocks from as early as the Carboniferous Period, supposedly some 250,000,000 years old."

Page 173: "These prints give every evidence of having been made by human feet, at a time when the rocks were soft mud . . . This sort of thing is not a rare occurrence but is found rather frequently. However, geologists refuse to accept the evidence at face value, because it would mean either that modern man lived in the earliest years of the postulated evolutionary history or that this history must be condensed to a duration measured by the history of man. Neither alternative is acceptable," that is, to the evolutionist.

Then Whitcomb and Morris quote an evolutionist by the name of Albert C. Ingalls, who says: "If man, or even his ape ancestor, or even that ape ancestor's early mammalian ancestor, existed as far back as in the Carboniferous Period in any shape, then the whole science of geology is so completely wrong that all the geologists will resign their jobs and take up truck driving. Hence, for the present at least, science rejects the attractive explanation that man made these mysterious prints in the mud of the Carboniferous Period with his feet."

Quite an admission, wouldn't you say? And really quite "unscientific" to simply sweep away the evidence with a stroke of the pen — "science rejects the attractive explanation that man made these mysterious prints . . .". This is what Whitcomb and Morris have to say about it: "Ingalls and others have tried to explain the prints as modern Indian carvings or as prints made of some as yet undiscovered Carboniferous amphibian. Such explanations illustrate the methods by which the uniformitarians can negate even the most plain and powerful evidence in opposition to their philosophy. Nevertheless, it is obvious that it is only the philosophy, and not the objective scientific evidence, that would prevent one from accepting these prints as of true human origin." (page 173).

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth," (Gen. 1:1). That is not a scientific explanation of the beginning of all things, but it is the biblical revelation of God's act of creation, including the creation of human beings in His image. I accept the first chapters of Genesis as God's revelation of the beginnings of His world, and look forward to that great day when we shall finally "know fully even as also I was fully known," (I Cor. 13:12). ●