

# THE OUTLOOK

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DEVOTED TO THE EXPOSITION AND DEFENSE OF THE REFORMED FAITH

JUNE 1980



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**WHAT'S COMING UP AT THE CRC SYNOD?  
NOW LEGALIZED EUTHANASIA-  
SILENCE IS ASSENT**

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# "WHATSOEVER THINGS ARE PURE . . ."

John Vander Ploeg

The story has been told and retold. Whether fact or fiction, I can vouch for neither. It goes something like this. A man of wealth needed a chauffeur, and he interviewed applicants for the position. The one question he asked them: "If we were on a mountain road alongside a deep precipice, how close would you dare to drive to the edge?"

The first applicant replied he would dare to drive a foot away from the edge, the second said six inches, the third would dare to drive right on the edge. The final applicant, the one whom the rich man hired, answered that he would stay as far away from the edge as possible. In a lecture on "Common Sense" many years ago, Dr. W. Harry Jellema (from whom I first heard that story) pointed out that in replying, the first three applicants used *common sense* whereas the last one used *uncommon sense*, of which there seems to be such a short supply.

To save his neck, the rich man of the story wanted to stay as far away from the edge as possible. A half century ago leaders in the CRC advocated something like that with respect to worldly amusements as these were threatening the well-being of the church. There were those who interpreted the 1928 decision on worldly amusements as saying that the familiar trio (theater attendance, card playing, and dancing) are sinful in themselves or *per se* and that the document was a legalistic prohibition, for which a careful reading of the text of the decision gives no justification.

That was more than fifty years ago, O tempora! O mores! how the pendulum has now swung in the other direction! Sophisticated and condescending with respect to the naivete of our ethicists of a bygone day, the in-crowd obviously is now straining to get just as close as possible to the edge or to a godless world while at the same time professing to be Christian. By their charade they may be fooling the church and even themselves, all the while forgetting that our all-knowing God cannot be fooled and will not be mocked.

In today's sex-saturated culture, our quest for holiness seems so often to be hopeless. Commercialized entertainment and advertising in their sickening and constant preoccupation with the female anatomy continues its unremitting appeal to our depraved nature. A noted Presbyterian author and clergyman, the late Henry J. Van Dyke, was certainly not far beside the point when he once voiced his grievance with the movie industry in words to this effect: "They know only one of the Ten Commandments, the seventh; and they know only one kind of enjoyment, the transgression of it."

In view of the all too obvious, shameful exploitation of sex in the world of show business (a glance at the glaring evidence for this on the movie page in every daily newspaper should be sufficient), Over-

ture 15 from Classis Minnesota South, addressed to this year's CRC Synod "to request the Board of Publications to discontinue reviews of movies in *The Banner*" should be well taken. As an added ground for the adoption of that overture, the words of Paul in Philippians 4:8 should be seriously considered: "... whatsoever things are pure ... think on these things. . . ."

"Whatsoever things are pure. . . ."

Now take a look at a few excerpts from a recent "Film Overview," the last one available to me at this writing, in *The Banner* of April 18, page 19:

1. "*All That Jazz* — The show-biz is a hard one that allows little real humanity. . . . Smattering of profanity, some nudity, and a highly erotic dance scene. . . . A self-centered indulgent movie. . . ."

2. "*Coal Miner's Daughter* — Adolescents and adults. Some profanity; no nudity, but a few suggestive scenes . . . film worth seeing."

3. "*Cruising* — Lurid, suspenseful thriller. . . . The sleaziest cross-section of homosexuality insufficiently explored. Half-baked messages; homosexuals are people too. . . . A raw, grisly film that only adults with very strong constitutions should see. Foul language, profanity, nudity, gore, and an inescapable ugly subject. A cruel, carelessly made film. The emphasis on homosexuals, unfortunately meant to be both sensational and sensitive, succeeds only in being shocking and exploitative. . . ."

4. "*Just Tell Me What You Want* — Romantic comedy; the comfortable life of a self-made tycoon is unexpectedly interrupted when his mistress of fifteen years suddenly abandons him to marry someone else . . . foul and profane language, some nudity; a lot of adultery — every new scene seems to turn up another new mistress. . . ."

5. "*Little Darlings* — Bittersweet comedy; while at summer camp, two adolescents compete against the other in a contest to see which one will be the first to lose her virginity and become a woman . . . a little crude and profane language . . . teenagers as well as parents ought to see this film."

You sort of rub your eyes in disbelief to find all this dished up for us in what claims to be the "official publication of the Christian Reformed Church." Reactions differ. Some are enthusiastic to have the church paper enlighten them by telling them the way it is at the movies. Another was heard to say he took one look at *The Banner* with the movie page and fired it across the room. Other reactions probably range somewhere between these two extremes. The editor advises anyone who does not like it to just turn the page — counsel that is hardly satisfying to those who feel a corporate responsibility for what is published in our "official" church publication.

"Whatsoever things are pure. . . ."

Also in the world of theater, dance, and fiction, all is not gold that glitters.

Woe to us and no less to our children if we obliterate or blur the very real distinction between *common grace* and *common garbage*.

Iran and Soviet Russia are by no means the greatest threat to the well-being of ourselves and our children. The persistent and pervasive influence of secularism to squeeze us into its mold is today a peril second to none. Movie productions, television, the salacious call to the flesh from the modern dance, as well as from the printed page, have made their impact on us and on our children for evil, the extent of which we have not yet begun to measure.

True, the antithesis is not spatial but spiritual. The CRC in 1928 with its pronouncement about worldly amusements and the attempt to implement it may have failed to see this clearly. But the far greater blight upon us now is that the antithesis is fast becoming non-existent. May the God of all grace have mercy on us lest we perish.

The author of the article, "The Need for Reformed Evangelism" on page 9 of our May issue was Rev. John R. Jackson, pastor of the Walker Christian Reformed Church. Through a printing oversight his name was omitted and in the Table of Contents the article was erroneously attributed to the editor.

### Is This the "Bride" Christ Bought?

Mrs. Laurie Vanden Heuvel

and

### Phooey on the Sermon and the Church Order

Edwin H. Palmer

are two very worthwhile articles reprinted from the "Outlook" several years ago in pamphlet form. They are under one cover and prove to be very prophetic in the light of what has transpired in our church during the past decade. A limited number of copies are still available at 50¢ each or 3 for a \$1.00. Special rates for larger quantities.

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# THE 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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## SPIRITUAL NUTRITION

Laurie Vanden Heuvel

There has never been a time in world history when people in developed countries have been so carefully and well fed physically. Nutrition is a subject which fills pages of every homemaker's magazine and captures the spotlight of many television ads. Careful studies and experiments have been conducted by experts in many professions and a legion of diets have been scientifically contrived to correct every conceivable deficient or unbalanced situation. Nutritious meals have become a priority on family planning agendas for many homemakers.

But in God's plan for the family there is something even more important than physical nutrition and that is spiritual nutrition. Not only has He provided a family nest in which children are to be fed spiritually but He has also provided a "people of God," a communal structure where children of God can be nurtured and worship. In the Old Testament there was a *theocracy* with all of its Biblical rites, ceremonies and instruction. In the New Testament Christ established the *church* and gave to it the task of *feeding the lambs*.

Lamb-feeding is the church's task. It must feed them through the preaching of the Word and also through supplementary organizations within the church designed for boys and girls. But the primary *educational* task of the church is to teach the lambs the mighty acts of God revealed as *sacred history* in the Scriptures and also the *basic Christian doctrine* demonstrated in these records of God's dealings with His children and further explained and applied by the prophets and apostles. Traditionally these two bodies of knowledge (sacred history and doctrine) have been taught as separate programs of the church — Sunday School and catechism. There has been an attempt in recent years to combine these two bodies of knowledge into one church school program. While it is true that sacred history is to an extent an embodiment and demonstration of the various doctrines of the Scripture — yet there is a lot of Biblical truth left undefined, unexplored and unexposed by such a pedagogical approach.

Perhaps one of the failures of the church in the past was the tendency to teach doctrine somewhat apart from the *context* of Scripture. As a result students who are now adults may have received the impression that doctrine was something other than Scripture. Nothing could be further from the truth. Yet one can understand how students might receive that impression. Doctrine must be taught within a *Biblical* context. Memory work answers should contain the direct testimony of Scripture whenever possible. Worksheets should draw students directly into Scripture where they must ferret out these doctrines for themselves. Lesson explanations must re-

inforce the doctrine being taught with Biblical examples wherever possible. In discussion, questions should solicit not only a *feedback* of research previously completed, but they should be questions which are structured to discover whether students have the ability to (1) *utilize* what they have learned and to determine to what extent students (2) *value* what they have learned.

In the teaching of sacred history, *perspective* is of vital importance. It is not enough to teach only dates, names, places or even events in chronological sequence. The teaching of sacred history must answer basic questions.

It must answer the question — WHAT is the Bible? The Bible is the self-revelation of God.

It must answer the question — WHY has God chosen to reveal Himself in the Bible? God has chosen to reveal Himself in the Bible so that His children may see God's *sovereignty*, *grace* and *design* in the working out of the plan of salvation in which all God's creation and God's children become united in Jesus Christ for the ultimate purpose of God's glory.

The teaching of sacred history must answer the question — HOW has God revealed Himself in the Bible? God has revealed Himself along three main lines which are distinguishable and yet always intertwined:

1. The *sovereignty* of God revealed in His working out of redemption. In all the literature of Scripture, students must see how sovereignly God has planned and guided the events of history to fulfill His purposes so that, for example, the significance of Joseph lies not only in his triumph over temptation, though that certainly is a lesson we must learn, but in God's overarching purpose of preparing, protecting and providing for a chosen people from whom His Son should one day be born.
2. The *grace* of God revealed in the *history* of redemption. Students must see that God in His dealings with His people was a God with a gracious *saving* purpose. His mighty acts, despite the rebellion of a stubborn people, were acts which did not destroy but *saved*. Adam was saved out of Eden; Noah was saved from the flood; Abraham was saved from a surrounding idolatrous people; Isaac was saved from the knife; Jacob was saved from the wrath of a brother Esau; Joseph was saved from his plotting brothers; Moses was saved from death in the river; Israel was saved from Pharaoh; the dispersed tribes of Judah and Benjamin were saved from certain death through Queen Esther; David was saved from the spear of Saul and the plotting of his own son; baby Jesus was saved from the knife of Herod. And through it all was the sovereign and gracious guiding of our God to fulfill His divine purpose.
3. The *design* of God revealed in His *covenantal method* of uniting His Church to Jesus Christ. Students must see that God, in achieving the whole purpose of redemption, worked with a people whom He called His own. He guided the events of their lives with such precision and love that in many cases He had an answer to

their problems all prepared before they even laid their petitions before Him. The scope of His covenantal love was so broad that He elevated those of low degree such as Ruth and Esther and Mary and He incorporated into the ancestry of His Son, people of ill repute such as Rahab. Students must also see that God's method is *covenantal* to this day. Galatians 3:26-29 says, "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is... neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be *Christ's* then are ye *Abraham's seed* and *heirs* according to the promise." Those who become Christ's by faith, enter into a *covenantal* relationship with Him and all belong to the *family of God*. The Church of Jesus Christ is not called a collection of individuals but rather, a BODY.

These three unifying themes of Scripture run through all of Scripture — history, poetry, proph-

ecy, wisdom, literature and epistles. They must be pointed out and stressed and applied in every lesson. This perspective will teach children the (a) progressive development in Scripture and the (b) unity of Scripture. This perspective will also prevent the "stories" of Scripture from being taught either in (a) isolation from their immediate and overall context or (b) only for their moral lessons, even though those lessons are so very important and must be applied.

Spiritual nutrition must have top priority in the planning for our families. God has provided the revelation and He intends that we and our children assimilate and practice it.

This concludes our series on "Family Planning." Much more could be said but this is sufficient to show that true "family planning" is not a restriction or a reduction to be placed on parents, but rather an exciting challenge and a solemn responsibility. ●

*Mrs. Vanden Heuvel, editor of this department, lives at 207 Kansas Ave. N.W., Orange City, Iowa 51041.*

## WHAT'S COMING UP AT THE CRC SYNOD?

Peter De Jong

Each year the OUTLOOK prints an overview of the materials which require the attention of the Christian Reformed Churches' June synod. This year the printed *Agenda* is somewhat shorter than usual although it still includes 435 pages — more than most consistory members who obtain copies will ever read. A summary may be useful to them as well as to many other interested church members.

### Radio and TV

As usual the first and one of the most encouraging reports comes from the Back-to-God Hour which reported releasing 65,000 programs during the year. The continuing growth and effectiveness of that activity should be seen in the light of its continuing and expressed sense of direction: "Our commitment to preaching demands that the direction our work takes be controlled by the contents of the Scriptures — not first of all by the latest development in broadcast gimmickry, nor even by a sophisticated analysis of what the audience wants." "For within the Bible we find not only the message we proclaim, but we discern information about the way the Christian message must be related to the several cultures we seek to penetrate" (p. 12).

The report on the English broadcasts observes that they contain "a polemic element... primarily oriented to views of the Bible that dilute its trustworthiness and authority, and to views that tend to fragment it" and that they also express "an aggressive opposition to the increasingly hostile world view which has yielded such degenerations of human life as abortion on demand." "And with this

there is always a call to conversion and salvation," an effort "to make clear the way of salvation by faith alone and by grace alone" (p. 13). "A special daily half-hour broadcast called 'Radio today'... is... designed to meet the need of in-depth Bible study of those who have not had the opportunity to study the Bible before" and is directed to over-seas areas. One wonders whether this popular English broadcast might profitably be directed to listeners at home where even in our churches ignorance of the Bible and its doctrines is often surprising and evidently increasing. Among the foreign language broadcasts those in Arabic have been getting special attention and a growing response out of the Moslem world. Those broadcasts resist the pressures to compromise the gospel message in order to make it "more acceptable to the followers of Muhammad" under the conviction that the gospel "cannot be assimilated into what was first a Muslim world view." Our Arabic preacher, Rev. Bassam Madany, "considers the Scriptures as the controlling dominant element in all that He does; there is the conviction that the scriptural language and methodology do not admit of modification or adjustment" (pp. 17-18). Very striking in the development of these various foreign language broadcasts is the fact that the preachers are men who are bringing the gospel in their native languages: Mr. Madany is a Syrian, Rev. Juan Boonstra of the Spanish language ministry is a native and citizen of Argentina, Rev. Isaac Jen, himself a native of Shanghai, preaches to the millions of Chinese. Rev. Aaron Kayayan, a Reformed pastor in Paris, addresses the French and French-speaking people elsewhere and is seeing a

remarkable response in the African country of Zaire, Rev. Junus Atmarumeksa, a former Buddhist, addresses the Indonesians, the Japanese broadcast is to be taken over by a Japanese minister of the Reformed Church of Japan, and Dr. Wilson Castro Ferreira, a native of Brazil, established the Portuguese language ministry and as he nears retirement may be replaced by Rev. Celsino Gama, one of his former students.

The Report on our television efforts, still in their infancy, detail some of the experiments that have been made in using this somewhat different media. Will the singleminded determination to "be controlled by the contents of the Scriptures — not first of all by the latest development in broadcast gimmickry, nor even by a sophisticated analysis of what the audience wants" which have directed our radio programs also continue to direct our TV efforts in defiance of the enormous pressures to give viewers what most of them want?

### Calvin College and Seminary

The Report of the Calvin Board of Trustees is very brief — less than 7 pages. There is no financial or salary report. One could hardly guess from the few housekeeping details that are reported that these, our church-owned and supported schools, strategically important in the training of many of our leaders confront us with some of our most threatening problems. It is simply a fact that many of the leaders in college and seminary follow and defend a policy, diametrically opposed to that envisioned in our radio programs, the liberal critical treatment of the Bible which permits one to freely "reinterpret" or contradict it whenever he thinks he has adequate reasons for doing so.

### World Missions

Our world missions now reach into 15 countries. Faced by a policy decision whether to send few missionaries into many fields or more missionaries into relatively few fields, the board decided in favor of the latter course of concentrating missionary resources in fewer fields, "in a commitment to word and deed ministries . . ." while trying "to avoid excessive establishment of mission institutions or the creation of a climate of dependency." This matter of basic policy is not submitted to the synod for the churches' decision (as it formerly might have been) but is simply reported as a fact.

One of the most significant developments reported in one field after another is that as the local churches and denominations grow, the responsibility for and control of missionary activities which was formerly in the missionary organizations is now being taken over by the churches, and our missionaries who are still in those fields work with, for or under them. This is happening in Africa, Asia and Latin America. This is in general a natural and welcome development — our avowed aim, especially since about 1950 when our synods committed themselves to "indigenous" church development. At the same time there are bound to be problems in making

adjustments to the new situation. The "indigenous policy," seeking to follow Biblical precedent, envisioned speedy development of churches that would be self-propagating, self-governing and self-supporting. Often there seems to be, on the part of the churches on the fields, greater enthusiasm for the *self-government* than for the *self-support*. I noticed in the report on Mexico that the national church "wants to have a voice from the very beginning in what is going on within her borders. She is asking for direct granting of funds which are to be expended in kingdom causes according to the national church's ideas of priority." While there may be occasion to give help in special needs the notion that when churches are mature enough to handle their own responsibilities in other respects they are still entitled to expect financial support from outside sources ought to be challenged. We must not forget that the Biblical injunction "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ" is accompanied by another, "For every man shall bear his own burden" (Gal. 6:2, 5). The cut-back on our expenditures forced upon us by economic recession compel us and should compel us to drop permanent subsidy programs (which were sometimes debatable or objectionable from the beginning). In this connection we may observe that the board is asking this synod "for a supplementary quota to compensate for the possibility of on-going dollar devaluation and overseas inflation" amounting to \$1.50 per family (above the regular \$60.35 per family mission quota).

One very important result of the movement toward independence on the part of churches in many of our mission fields is that they may by his development be spared many of the frustrations and heart-break that increasingly trouble our denominational life as among us the Biblical, doctrinal and practical unity that ought to characterize a Reformed church disintegrates.

One notes in this report, as in previous ones, that many of our missionaries are engaged in training pastors for these increasingly independent national churches. The Nigeria field in 1979 reported having 118 pastors and 481 evangelists at work there.

### Home Missions

The Home Mission Board favors the organization of a classis of our Indian churches. It presents a single nomination (Rev. Dirk Hart) for Minister of Evangelism? Why is the Synod offered no choice? It reports that the payment of its quota by Canadian churches increased in the last ten years from 42% to 82%. The quota request is for \$75.55 per family.

### Publications

The Board of Publications reports regarding its church school curriculum, "out of its 1619 accounts, 788 are CRC, 472 are RCA, and 253 are Presbyterian (various denominations)." With a view to the non-CRC customers it is asking for approval of creating "an advisory position on the Education Committee" for a qualified person from the RCA and a similar position for a Presbyterian (p. 97). We ought to

observe that a considerable number of our churches are using little or none of this material because it simply does not attempt to teach the doctrines of the faith as systematically and extensively as the older catechism materials and classes do. Are we trying in these publications to teach and promote what our churches are supposed to confess, or are we trying to promote commercial sales of materials we think may appeal to most buyers? The Board asks approval for providing special curriculum materials for the mentally impaired. The *Banner* gets its new editor August 29. It will continue to print its widely criticized movie reviews, which are supposed to be "extending Christ's dominion"! *De Wachter* will continue to be issued as the denomination's Dutch publication.

The 1978 Synod instructed "all those agencies requesting quota support to include their salary and fringe benefit schedules" in the Agenda. Although the mission boards report this information (see pages 68 and 92), this board, not wanting to publicize this information, states it will give it in a supplementary report to Synod. Why may our churches not find out what they are paying their employees? The Board (which sells most of its publications) asks for a \$2.50 per family quota.

### World Relief

The World Relief Committee, taking up its project to combat hunger in Sierra Leone, plans to spend between \$10,000,000 and \$15,000,000 over a 15-year period on it. Cooperative planning between the relief agency and the mission boards, while under discussion, is not yet a working policy.

The relief agency is arranging a conference to "lay the groundwork for" its "work on social justice and structural change" (p. 112). Did the Lord assign to His church the job of restructuring society? The relief agency "disturbed by its inability to incorporate an evangelical witness into its program" in the nation of Jordan, is closing down that program. It has also phased out its Korean family assistance program. Its total budget for 1980-81 is \$3,768,897.

### Bible Translation

The Bible translation committee has reviewed the New International Version of the Bible and presents an informative report on that version as well as on the broader subject of Bible translation. Although it has some criticisms of the NIV (It observes that NIV could have given more footnotes and that it is somewhat more inclined to follow the principle of "dynamic equivalence" while the RSV "is more a word-for-word translation.) it judges the NIV to be an excellent modern version and recommends that the synod designate it as one of the versions acceptable for use in worship services.

Professor Bastiaan Van Elderen (who in 1966 as a synod committee member opposed this translation project, *Acts 1966*, pp. 384, 385), now as a minority of one, opposes the recommendation to approve this version. He criticizes the NIV's use of the principle of "dynamic equivalence," observing that this "may

promote greater clarity and understanding of a passage, but often this at the expense of precision and fidelity to the original language. For private use, devotional reading and study purposes this may be acceptable. And the NIV is an excellent contribution to the collection of such versions. However, one must question whether a version employing the principle of dynamic equivalence can be used liturgically in the church." He opposes the approval of this version especially because it has not yet been generally accepted by the ecumenical church world.

### Translation and Educational Assistance

The 1979 Synod decided to combine two quite different programs, one for translating and publishing Reformed literature in other languages and the other for supporting advanced education for students from Reformed churches in other parts of the world, under one "umbrella-type organization." It is evident that the uniting of these two has not produced a happy union. The efforts to raise money for supporting the education of Reformed students from abroad has not been very successful. The committee complains, "unfortunately, our letter appeals to all of our congregations and diaconates have not generated the kind of response that our commitment as a church requires of us, even though many churches give generously to similar scholarship programs in various other schools and Bible institutes." It is not hard to see why this cause generates little enthusiasm. Uprooting students from their own culture and manner of living for an extended period of study in the U.S. sometimes does more to hinder than to help them prepare for effective Christian service in their home country. Some feel that such training can better be given within their country. More serious than the economic and social disruption which such a program may bring about is the question whether training at Calvin College and Seminary with their divided and compromising policy regarding the fundamental Reformed principle of the unqualified authority of the Bible, will strengthen or weaken the Christian convictions of those church leaders.

Besides being generally handicapped by weak support, the report mentions one more policy which the committee is promoting, an effort to recruit and support black South Africans for training here in what is frankly called a kind of "affirmative action" program. The transparent hypocrisy of claiming to oppose discrimination by such a discriminatory program of giving special priority to students of one race and one area over all others can hardly expect to generate much respect or support. The report calls attention to the incidental benefit that students in this program are helpful to other students in broadening their missionary interests. That is understandable, but whom is the program seeking to educate?

### Interchurch Relations

This committee comments on its contacts especially with the North American Presbyterian

and Reformed Council and the Reformed Church of America. The Christian Reformed Churches in the Netherlands are approaching "ecclesiastical fellowship" with us, but their affiliated Free Reformed Churches on this continent, who are better acquainted with us, are opposing that move.

### Liturgical Committee

The Liturgical Committee confronts us with a new collection of prayers ranging from the historical (some from John Calvin) to the non-traditional contemporary, a new form for readmission (of those who have been disciplined) and new Advent and Christmas variations on the new (4th) Form for the Lord's Supper. While there is merit in some of the material, hasn't this perennial liturgical tinkering gone about far enough? In our worship we must try to do all things "decently and in order" (1 Cor. 14:40), but the annual productions of this committee often seem to multiply disorder. One can find some appropriate prayers in its collection of antiquities and novelties, but do we have to have synodical sponsorship for the whole motley collection including even one ambiguous sentimentality of St. Francis of Assisi which I was startled to hear sung in one of our churches (p. 207)? About the only thing I did not observe in the collection was a prayer for reformation or revival of dead churches that seek to compensate for their boredom with God's truth by elaborating ritual. (Someone the other day compared D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones' unadorned Bible expositions in a crowded, shabby Westminster Chapel with the many beautiful British churches, exuding religious atmosphere and elaborate liturgy but virtually empty.) Hasn't the time come for us to discharge this committee and declare a moratorium on liturgical novelties? Synod action on them is really rather superfluous, for the churches that most want them are often those which are least likely to feel bound by what the synod decides.

### Race

The Synodical Committee on Race Relations was appointed some years ago with a grandiose mandate to work "to eliminate racism, both causes and effects, within the body of believers and throughout the world in which we live," but with no specific job assignment. The results over the years have been predictable, frequent frustrations for the committee and an obvious waste of the churches' money. A review of its budget usually told the story. Half or more of it went to man the office and its activities and the rest had to be given to other agencies that had assigned jobs! This year the program is being enlarged by creating a new staff position to "develop minority leadership," to be paid at the "Executive Level II" scale (which is the \$21,600-\$32,400 bracket, see page 68) plus fringe benefits and a part-time secretary. This year while there is a request for \$2.40 per family quota, the budget of this agency doesn't even appear in the Agenda! Rev. William Ipema has already been appointed for the new job.

To promote the unity of believers across the barriers of race and diversities of national origin is a good thing, but how a program that deliberately discriminates in favor of certain minorities over others can contribute to that by removing discrimination is a mystery. How long will our churches, pressed by an economic recession, keep on spending between \$100,000 and \$200,000 on such a self-contradicting enterprise?

### Synodical Interim Committee

The synodical interim committee mentions one of its more nettlesome problems, that of trying to determine why an increasing number of ministers are in trouble and leaving the ministry and what can be done about it. This is in the hands of a sub-committee on "healing ministries." That this problem is demanding attention tells us something about the spiritual condition of the denomination.

### Dancing

A report on "dance and the Christian life" was occasioned by the Board of Calvin College's approval of social dancing at the college. A synod committee now in an 18-page study (pp. 291ff.) in effect endorses that position with certain conditions, arguing that the dance is an area which the Christian ought to be "redeeming," and even suggesting that we ought to be looking into its "liturgical" use. Although many of the considerations and arguments are truisms with which almost all would agree, one is troubled by the direction the whole discussion takes as well as the unrealistic outcome. The report recalls a discussion I once had with a sailor after a Bible study of Romans 14, the famous chapter which gives direction on matters in which Christians disagree. It calls attention to two principles: (1) "each one of us shall give account of himself to God" (vs. 12) and (2) "that no man put a stumbling-block or an occasion to fall in his brother's way." The sailor began by stating that he was going to quit dancing. I asked him, "Why?" He replied that if this scripture showed how the Lord wanted us to live he would have to stop the practice. I responded that I was inclined to agree with him, but that another evangelical chaplain with us on the same ship felt that such a negative judgment was too strict. His retort was, "I've danced too much for anyone to tell me he could be hugging a girl on a dance floor and thinking about his Sunday school lesson"; if this was the Lord's teaching, he'd have to quit. The judgment in this case was not mine — the subject of dancing had not come up before — it was his conclusion from what the Bible was saying.

And as to the subject of "liturgical dancing," can anyone seriously show how it can be deduced from the Lord's injunction to "preach the Word"? I once saw a woman dancing what was announced as "the Lord's Prayer." She was a skilled dancer, but I could find no conceivable connection between her gyrations and the prayer our Lord taught us. Perhaps the performance was addressed to some other "lord."



## Marriage Guidelines

Another 18 page report reviews again the often reviewed Biblical materials and church discussions on marriage, divorce and remarriage. The conclusions, stated in broad terms, generally restate what has been said before: the "God-willed permanence of marriage," His opposition to divorce, the need for discipline in cases in which there is no repentance from sin, etc. At the same time there is so much flexibility in the report's advice that one can go in a variety of directions with it. "Even where there is great guilt in divorce with no apparent repentance, the church must continue to minister persistently and patiently." "However recognizing the limits of human ability to discern the subtlety and intricacy of human motivation, the church must recognize the limits of its ability to assess guilt and blame in the intimate and private turmoil of marital distress" (p. 326). "Deal pastorally with those who have failed to keep the biblical principle by a. Refraining from a strictly legal approach to remarriage that tries to provide a basis for judgment that certain categories of remarriage are always compatible or incompatible with the teachings of Scripture" (p. 327). The fact is that the evils of unbiblical divorces and remarriages are growing at an enormous rate within our churches as well as in society outside of them. While we cannot try to lay down a complete legal code to cover such matters, a broad report such as this with so many qualifications is likely to have little effect in deterring the church from its present course of becoming "conformed to the world."

## Boer's Gravamen Against the Canons

The largest single item in the Agenda is the 72-page report of the study committee that had to evaluate Dr. Harry Boer's attack on the doctrine of reprobation as our churches confess it in the Canons of Dort (I, 6 and 15). The committee points out that the Canons do *not* teach what Dr. Boer misrepresents them as teaching, that the doctrine of reprobation is a decree which makes God the cause of man's unbelief and which condemns men without merit or demerit on their part. Therefore it recommends that the synod do not accede to Dr. Boer's request to take this doctrine out of the creed or make it non-binding. The committee's case is in general competently argued and its conclusion invites approval. Since this subject has been discussed in a variety of OUTLOOK articles, what they said does not need to be repeated. A few comments, however, seem appropriate. (1) Dr. Boer attacked the doctrine of reprobation confessed in the creed by appealing to the Bible, alleging that the Bible does not teach it. His appeal to the Bible is rather unconvincing since he also attacks the Bible as being full of mistakes. (Anyone who would question that should read his little book *Above the Battle? the Bible and Its Critics.*) Whatever arguments anyone might draw from the Bible could hardly be expected to convince him since he is free to set them aside. Regardless of Boer's own specious appeal to the Bible, however, the church should be prepared to maintain its credal

doctrine of reprobation, (the important fundamental truth that in choosing some out of the group God was not choosing the whole group) by showing how the Bible teaches it. The attack of Boer and others on the doctrine directs attention to the way in which this Bible teaching has been neglected. It needs to be reaffirmed and taught. (2) Reaffirming this Biblical teaching becomes the more urgent because the synod's faulty handling of this matter three years ago really makes the churches' commitment to this doctrine questionable. At the beginning of every synod the delegates declare their adherence to the creeds and restate their ordination promise to defend them especially against attacks of the kind that were made against the Canons. Despite that promise the 1977 Synod decided to print the attack of Dr. Boer against the creed and declare the matter open to general discussion without anyone even making a gesture to defend that creed against what the study committee now points out was a false charge. Even if this synod does not sustain the attack of Dr. Boer, doesn't the question still have to be asked whether the churches still believe the creed which they have invited anyone to freely criticize for the last three years? If we still hold this creed will we discipline officers who break their ordination vows and publicly attack it? (3) This study committee report while pointing out that Dr. Boer's allegations about what the creed teaches are false, in its treatment of some of the Bible texts involved states that it "agrees with Dr. Boer that the Scripture passages which he cites in his gravamen do not specifically and explicitly teach the doctrine of reprobation" (p. 390).

The problem that one senses here, as in much of the modern exegetical work on such texts and in the views of Dr. Boer and others who think like him, is that the whole approach to these texts and their doctrines lacks what is embodied and assumed in the creeds, a sense of the overwhelming greatness of God, and of His sovereign control over all things. Think of how that truth constantly recurs in Isaiah, for example. "Who hath directed the spirit of the Lord, or being his counsellor hath taught him?" "Behold the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance; behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing." "All nations before him are as nothing; and they are counted to him less than nothing and vanity. To whom then will ye liken God?" (Isa. 40:13-18). Or think of the Lord Jesus' reminder that "Even the very hairs of your head are all numbered" (Lk. 12:7), and that a sparrow "shall not fall on the ground without your Father" (Mt. 10:29). In the light of that pervasive teaching of the Bible how can one lightly set aside as un-Biblical the teaching of Romans 11 that He determines the destiny of men or of Eph. 1:11 that He "worketh all things after the counsel of his own will"? One senses a certain arrogant ungodliness, rather like that of all modern secularists, prompting men to approach the Bible in this way. In fact one suspects that those who presume so airily to argue what God can or cannot be permitted to do are not really talking about the same God that we worship at all, or have forgotten, in their argument,

Who and What He is. We must worship, as men such as Luther and Pascal reminded us, the *Living God* — not the god (or idol) of the philosophers.

### Use of Members' Gifts

There has long been a tendency in our churches as in other Protestant churches to become dominated by the ministers in much the way the Roman Catholic churches became dominated by the clergy. What has contributed to this has been a failure to appreciate the Bible's teaching about the calling and office of each real believer and the way in which the special offices are properly related to that. (A key Biblical passage in disclosing this important principle is Ephesians 4:11.) A growing awareness of this neglect of the use of ordinary church members' gifts led in 1977 to the appointment of a synodical study committee which now submits its report. The aim of the committee invites agreement and support, but its report also reveals a peculiar prejudice which limits its persuasiveness and usefulness. The report, for example, finds the use of members' gifts inhibited by a "fear of change." "Change (e.g. in worship services or in starting deaconess programs), it may be felt disturbs the peace..." The remedy it suggests (with a reference to Romans 14 and 15 and 1 Cor. 8) is "that the weak — those who fear change? — must grow up in faith. The strong — those who are mature in faith? — must coach the weak without offending them." Notice the naive assumptions in this: The "strong" are those who want to introduce all kinds of experimental novelties in worship and those who are crusading to put women into church offices, and the "weak" are the poor deluded people who are not ready to buy these novelties and who need patient coaching to enlighten them (p. 408)! That way of presenting the matter is, to say the least, debatable. In the Bible's presentation those who are "tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind" of change are not the mature but the "children" whose immaturity badly needs the ministry of pastors and teachers to help them grow up (Eph. 4:11ff). And those who can't tell the difference between good and evil, right and wrong, but will swallow anything (Heb. 5:11-14) are not grown-ups but retarded children. Advice and recommendations that come out of such a distorted perspective as the report at this point displays, had better be critically reviewed before they are followed.

### Overtures

The Agenda contains 18 pages of overtures:

1 — requires a year of pastoral experience for every 5 years a professor serves in our seminary. This might make the seminary course more useful.

2 — would require all denominational agencies to give each consistory a full financial report, including salaries. Don't the churches have a right to know what they are paying for? May we support those who refuse to tell us what they do with our money? Notice also Overture 9.

3 — would equalize clergy and lay representation on all denominational boards and eliminate

"members at large." It sounds like a good idea but would be hard to arrange.

4 — would study the Elks Lodge to see whether membership in it is compatible with membership in the church.

5 — would restrict the role of seminary professors as advisors to the synod so that they no longer assume the right, as they have been doing, to speak as though they were delegates, on any subject. The analysis of the history of this advisory role and the way it has been abused substantiates the overture.

6 — would divide the overgrown Classis Grand Rapids East into two normally sized classes.

7 — would designate a "sanctity of life Sunday." Any effort to oppose the atrocity of millions of abortions invites sympathy and support, but ought we to set aside a special Lord's Day for this purpose?

8 — would have classical stated clerks send to the church papers announcements of accepted calls.

9 — would have the Synod urge all denominational boards to report on salary schedules as they were instructed to do in 1978 but many have not done. Why not order them to comply with the decision? Who is supposed to be responsible for the government of the church, the boards or the synod?

10 — would restrict quota assistance to seminary students to those who intend to enter the regular CRC ministry, on the basis that this is in line with the Church Order. This looks like straight thinking.

11 — would exempt churches who had previously introduced women deacons from last year's decision that their election to office should not be further implemented. It seems that last year's prohibition is simply being ignored by a number of churches, and the synod will have to deal with this matter unless it permits its decisions to become meaningless.

12 — would reverse a decision of the Fund for Needy Churches Committee which did not grant a consistory's request for aid.

13 — would discontinue movie reviews in *The Banner* on the ground that they are unnecessary. The ground sounds rather weak. Those reviews sometimes show little discrimination, not to mention Christian evaluation.

16 — would replace synod's rules of order with Robert's Rules of Order and arrange for a parliamentarian. It seems that recent synods have sometimes shown a callous disregard of their own rules. Would they obey any other rules?

17 — would delegate deacons to major assemblies. This lengthy overture again obscures the biblical principle that the governmental authority in the church is entrusted to the elders. As a general resistance to the very principle of authority increases among us, the lines of the Lord's order in His church as in other areas of life become increasingly obscured.

18 — aims at making the churches' relief committee cooperate more closely with its other agencies.

19 — would form a separate classis of Indian churches.

There will, no doubt, be other materials added to the agenda before the synod meets. Rev. W. Haver-

kamp, editor of *De Wachter* in it and *The Banner* has been calling attention to a serious new development in our old mother churches, the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands. Those churches have long been tolerating among their leaders denials of basic Christian doctrines including that of the atonement. Now they have officially declared their toleration of practicing homosexuality among their members. The *Wachter* editor suggests that this "appalling" decision has brought him to the "conviction that the time has come to take steps to sever the existing relationship" with those churches. Since our interchurch relations come up for consideration at every synod it would appear in order that his suggestion should be taken up as an urgent matter. The Bible enjoins us to "have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them" (Eph. 5:11). In the face of this scandalous contempt of our old mother churches for even most elementary Biblical standards of Christian conduct

(See Romans 1:24ff. for example), our emphatic repudiation of such behavior should be firm and prompt. Continuing "fellowship" with them implies our approval or indifference.

The Verhey case should be coming back to the synod, belatedly because of the dubious technical demand that it must first again go through the classes, but still being presented, in case synod delegates have a mind to address it. Fortright dealing with this compromise of our adherence to the Bible has been too often and too long delayed.

The Agenda issues that demand decision seem to be fewer than they have sometimes been. The churches are always called to be faithful to the Word of God, and especially the problems that arise where that faithfulness is threatened must be faced. Evading or compromising worsens the threats. Let us never stop praying and working for a real reformation in our churches — one directed by God's Spirit through His Word. ●

## First Legalized Abortion Now Legalized Euthanasia

E. L. Hebden Taylor

During the anti-abortion struggle in England in 1966-1967 in which I took part against Steel's bill in the British House of Commons to legalize abortion I pointed out that if his bill was passed it would not be long before the British Parliament also legalized euthanasia. Such has in fact now happened. Legalized murder of both the unborn and the very old is now part of the law of the United Kingdom.

It seems that history is about to repeat itself over here in the United States. First the Supreme Court legalized the murder of the unborn up to the end of the second trimester in January, 1973. Now an American court has tried to legalize euthanasia last January. I refer to the case of Earle Spring, a former pharmacist from the Springfield, Massachusetts area who said "I want to live," but who was condemned to death by an American judge so that he could "die with dignity." National and international pressure forced a decision by a higher court to place Mr. Spring back on dialysis treatment.

In the first case of attempted legalization of the Nazi practice of euthanasia in the United States, Massachusetts Probate Court Judge Sanford Keedy ordered upon January 18th of this year that 78-year-old Earle Spring be removed from the dialysis treatment, medication, and special diet necessary to his survival — so that he might "die with dignity."

Later, after Spring had already missed four dialysis treatments and was beginning to show the effects of uremic poisoning, Judge Keedy refused to reverse his decision, even when the court-appointed guardian for Spring protested that no thorough medical or psychiatric examination of Spring had taken place in over a year.

Later that same day, Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court Judge Francis Quirico, after much national and international pressure had been mobilized on Spring's behalf, ordered that he be placed back on dialysis. Quirico acted on the basis of an affidavit presented by a doctor and a nurse who had spoken to Spring at the Holyoke Geriatric Center.

The nurse's affidavit said: "I asked him if life was good. He said, 'Yes!' I asked him if he wanted to die. He thought for a moment and said 'No.'"

The affidavit of Dr. Nelson Gillet said: "He was able to make a weak expression of his desire to live. My supposition is that his state may be worsened by the lack of dialysis and medical treatment." Earle Spring did not want to "die with dignity" as the advocates of euthanasia put it.

In his book *The Right to Live and The Right to Die*, Dr. C. Everett Koop, a famous pediatric surgeon explains what euthanasia means. He writes:

The term *euthanasia* comes from the Greek and means painless, happy death (*eu* — well, plus *thanatos* — death). The Euthanasia Society of America, founded in 1938, defines euthanasia as the "termination of human life by painless means for the purpose of ending severe physical suffering." Gradually the meaning of the word changed from the connotation of easy death to the actual medical deed necessary to make death easy. Finally it reached the idea of "mercy killing." . . . The common synonym for euthanasia in both lay and professional vocabularies has been mercy killing. . . . The deliberate killing of one human being by another, no matter what the motivation might be, is murder. Some distinction is usually made between a positive, decisive, death-producing act and the act of permitting death to occur by withholding life-support mechanism or life-extending procedures" (page 95, Tyndale House, 1976).

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Today in the United States, the Hospice Movement, the Right To Die advocates as well as the Euthanasia Society, with the aid of the atheist liberal press, have succeeded in creating a climate of public opinion in America in which families assent to the murder of their own parents and grandparents.

Yet the Hospice Movement supported by Senator Edward Kennedy is advocating the use of exactly the same methods of "mercy killing" as the Nazi euthanasia methods of 1940. In 1978, Kennedy was the keynote speaker at the First Annual Convention of the Hospice Movement, Inc. in the United States, itself modeled on the hospice program in Great Britain. In St. Christopher's Hospice in London, however, those deemed terminally ill are not merely left to "die with dignity." They are fed what is called the Brompton Mixture — composed of heroin, cocaine, chloroform water, alcohol, and tranquilizers — every three hours until the patient dies.

In every case, the basic arguments offered by the advocates of the "right to die" movement put forward precisely the same rationale as the Nazis did: cost-cutting and mercy killing.

On January 20, 1980, the *Boston Globe* hailed the Keedy order to take Earle Spring off dialysis as follows:

"Individuals can legally stipulate in advance that they agree to the withdrawal of medical care if it should become clear that they have lost the capacity to recover from a debilitating condition. But many are understandably reluctant to enter into an agreement that runs counter to the impulses of essential hopefulness that prevails in mankind. Given that reality, the courts will in many cases become the final arbiter in decisions involving the right to die. The decision in the Spring case marked a humane step on that difficult course."

Dr. John Shear, Earle Spring's attending physician was more explicit. Upon hearing of the Quirico decision to return Spring to dialysis treatment, he said: "This will totally bottle up health care and escalate costs. People will have to be kept in ICU's indefinitely with incredible implications.

"The decisions about stopping treatment are made perhaps hundreds of times a day in Massachusetts. It is a very, very common thing. People get into situations where you can prolong life in a variety of ways: tubes, ventilators, pacemakers, all kinds of things can be done today. At times you have to make quality of life decisions. Patients do this when they are competent."

In hearings, January 24th, 1980, the attorney who had pressed for Spring's murder, Ms Marguerite Dolan, complained to the court that the placing of Spring on a dialysis machine the previous night — as Judge Quirico had ordered — was "an extraordinary practice," when there is, she claimed, a recognized shortage of dialysis machines. She protested the court decision had greatly inconvenienced the dialysis center. Judge Quirico reminded the attorney that had Mr. Spring not received dialysis that same night, he would in all likelihood have died.

I submit that euthanasia is contrary to the law of God and of the Nuremberg law entitled Crimes

Against Humanity under which any form of euthanasia is outlawed.

The Christian view of this matter is summed up in the words of Job used in the Anglican Burial Office: "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away (Life), blessed be the Name of the Lord." Only God the Creator of the soul of a man or a woman has the right to call it home out of this world. Once we allow judges and doctors to play at God over the sanctity of innocent human life, whether at the beginning of a human life as in the case of an unborn child or at the end of a human life as in the case of an elderly person, then a Pandora's box will have been unloosed which must inevitably result in the same sort of events as took place in Nazi Germany. Dr. Koop warns in the same book from which I have already quoted:

Our society, having lost its understanding of the sanctity of human life, is pushing the medical profession into assuming one of God's prerogatives, namely deciding what life shall be born and when life shall end. . . . If there is not to be a Judeo-Christian ethic in the preservation of life in matters pertaining to euthanasia, what does the future hold? The day may come when a death selection committee may objectively consider my life not to be worth much. . . . Certainly the rights of individuals will disappear: depersonalization and dehumanization will reign. . . . Once the human-value ethic becomes weakened or tarnished, it doesn't take long for human experimentation on human bodies to take place. Auschwitz could be in the offing (op cit. page 115).

Judge Sanford Keedy's decision to take Mr. Spring off dialysis was not only against the law of Almighty God Himself but also against the great Nuremberg law which reads in part:

"Namely, exterminating, enslavement, deportation and other inhumane acts committed against any civilian population before or during the war: *regardless whether or not in violation of the domestic law of the country where perpetrated.*" (emphasis added)

Today in the United States, Senator Edward Kennedy's Right to Die Movement, the Hospice Movement, the Death with Dignity advocates promote openly what the Nazis dared do only secretly.

The Nazi euthanasia program was enacted with a *secret* law in 1940. The mentally deficient, the crippled, the aged were murdered quietly by injections. According to the evidence presented at the Nuremberg International Tribunal on July 27, 1946:

"In July 1940, Bishop Wurm was writing to (Reich Interior Minister Wilhelm) Frick, 'For some months past, insane, feeble-minded and epileptic patients of state and private medical establishments have been transferred to another institution on the orders of the Reich Defense Council. Their relatives, even when the patient was kept at their cost, are not informed of the transfer until after it has taken place. Mostly they are informed a few weeks later after that the patient concerned has died of an illness and that owing to the danger of infection, the body has had to be cremated. . . .

'This fact is causing a particular stir in our small province. Everybody is convinced that the causes of

death which are published officially are selected at random. When, to crown everything, regret is expressed in the obituary notice that all endeavors to preserve the patient's life were in vain, this is felt as a mockery. But it is above all the mysteriousness which gives rise to the thought that something is happening which is contrary to justice and ethics and cannot therefore be openly defended by the government. . . ."

The Earle Spring case is a case of an elderly person who was sentenced to death by a court in 1980 in the United States of America. But how many other hundreds of thousands of elderly, driven to destitution by the Social Security System and by inflation

and driven to despair by illness have been left to silently die? Euthanasia is the end to which Carter's federal government's policy now leads. Today there are 1 million Americans in nursing homes who have been reduced to absolute penury. About 30 percent of these people are ruled incompetent, and are thus placed in immediate danger by the Earle Spring case. The continuing waves of nursing home scandals appearing in the daily press reflect a hideous process of malicious neglect of our aged. How many of our aged have been left to "die with dignity"? Probably as many Americans as have been aborted as yet unborn. ●

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## Let The Church Be Church . . .

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### "Christ is all and in all" (3)

Peter Y. De Jong

*In 1960 Prof. C. Veenhof of the Reformed Theological Seminary in Kampen, the Netherlands, wrote a book entitled *Om kerk te blijven*. It dealt largely with the ecclesiastical difficulties in the "Gereformeerde Kerken" in that country which led to division, disciplinary measures, and the disruption of that denomination.*

*To that book he added an "epilogue" wherein he sets forth impressively the sound Reformed view of what it means to be truly church in these times; words of instruction and warning and comfort which all of us do well to heed. Here we present to our readers a somewhat free translation of the epilogue with the prayer that it may help us to find our way as confessional Reformed churches in Canada and the United States in the problems and perplexities which disturb our souls.*

*Peter Y. De Jong, translator*

When the Catechism speaks positively about the church, it points to the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, and to His work.

Its response to the question "What do you believe about the church?" is brief and to the point. It declares that the Son of God *does* something, namely, to gather and defend and preserve. By this activity alone the church comes into and continues in existence.<sup>1</sup>

**The intimate bond** — Thus in speaking about the church, the confession concentrates all attention on Jesus Christ. Clearly and emphatically it proclaims: If you would know the church, you must direct your heart and thought entirely to Jesus Christ. Insofar as you know Christ, you know the church. Whoever

does not know Christ also does not know the church. At the same time, whoever truly knows Christ also surely knows the church. According to this testimony the bond between Christ and the church is so intimate that Jesus does not exist without His church. And conversely, the church without Christ is an impossibility!

Jesus without the church — that is Satan's world. But the church without the life-sustaining fellowship with Christ — that is the Devil's chapel.

**The new life** — When now reflecting on Christ and His church, we must above all be aware that Jesus Christ was crucified, dead, buried, and resurrected for His church, His congregation. Upon Him descended the entire burden of God's eternal wrath. Although He neither knew nor committed sin, He was made to be sin<sup>2</sup> for His church and so entered everlasting condemnation in its place. But thereafter He also arose for His own and so obtained full salvation for them.

Cross and resurrection — the saving-events on Golgotha and in the garden of Joseph of Arimathea — signify therefore the beginning, the dawn of a new dispensation, a new age. In them has come the new definitive humanity, the new definitive and final world. Since the cross and resurrection man and the world live in "the last hour."<sup>3</sup> What the last day in God's created order shall produce is nothing less than the complete accomplishment, the "consummation" of what Jesus Christ has done and bestowed by means of His cross and resurrection.

Thus the church participates in all that Christ accomplished and obtained. Whatever He achieved and received from the Father as the "reward" of His labor He achieved and received as the substitute, the head of the church which is His body or "corpus." Together with Christ the church was crucified and dead. In Him it now has death behind

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its back. So too, in Christ it now shares in the new creation brought into being and concentrated in Him. God's congregation has been raised with Christ unto a new life. Peter writes that the congregation has been begotten again by the resurrection of Christ from the dead.<sup>4</sup> In Christ the church already now is "seated" in heaven; its "life is hid with Him in God."

In and through Jesus Christ the church has entered into a new reconciled relationship to God. It has received in Him a new mode of existence, produced and preserved by the Spirit of Christ.<sup>5</sup>

**A stubborn evil** — In connection with the church's union with Christ and its involvement with His work there exists within a church a stubborn evil. By this evil "the treasures and gifts" which Christ has obtained and possesses for His own are abstracted from Him, set apart by themselves, and thus secularized. In this way forgiveness of sins, righteousness, regeneration, holiness, and the new life are regarded as gifts, realities, things which exist by themselves. They are viewed much like material gifts which people give to each other.

Such a conception of Christ's "treasures and gifts" is thoroughly deceitful and therefore destructive for the life of faith. According to Scripture the salvation which Christ has purchased for His own is inseparably bound up with His person. Salvation is in Him; it always remains in Him. Only "in Him," therefore, can believers receive and possess them.

Here, then, we are concerned with nothing less than the heart of religion. All the so-called higher non-Christian religions have their founders. These men proclaimed one or another way of salvation. But now they are dead, absolutely dead. Their disciples must now walk the salvation-way outlined in their writing by themselves. Ultimately these followers must become their own saviors. To be sure, the founders of those religions were the first confessors of what they created. But they are in no sense their "content." They sustain no more than an external relationship to those religions. Should the founders themselves be completely forgotten, the religions would continue unchanged. In them the founders no longer play an active role.

**He is Christianity** — But with Jesus Christ everything is radically different.

In no respect is He the "founder" of the Christian religion. Nor is He the first Christian. To state the matter plainly, He is Christianity. Therein He stands central. Apart from His name, His person, His being, there is no longer a Christian religion. Christ is the one, true, perfect mediator between God and man. In Him the fulness of the godhead dwells bodily. He is not merely the guide to God and salvation; He is *the Way*. Nor does He simply proclaim truth and bestow life; He is *the Truth* and He is *the Life*.<sup>6</sup>

Scripture sets forth for us in the most persuasive manner the unique person, position and office of Jesus Christ.

Here we are told not only that Jesus established the kingdom of God in this world; rather, He is that kingdom.<sup>7</sup> According to the impressive witness of

the ancient church He is "*autobasileia*," which is to say that in Him the kingdom is concentrated and concretized. In His person He brings the kingdom into this world, making it a reality in men's lives by His Holy Spirit.

In like manner Jesus Christ is also the *covenant* wherein God seeks to dwell with men. According to the word of Isaiah God has given Christ "as a covenant to the people."<sup>8</sup> Thus also the covenant of grace in its fulness is personified, concentrated, and realized in Him. It comes to man exclusively and only in His person and embraces in Him the life of all those called thereto in its every moment, expression, condition, and relationship.

**He is full salvation** — Christ therefore is not merely the leader and ruler of His church. Indeed not! He is the soul, the heart, the head of His congregation. The church is Christ's *body*. This designation more than any other expresses what the church is in its unique relationship to Jesus Christ. He together with those whom the Father has given Him constitute in their indissoluble union and communion the church of God. At one point Paul, pointedly and properly and without further qualification, goes so far as to call Jesus and all believers in their mutual and unbreakable oneness: *Christ*.<sup>9</sup>

This Christ, then, is wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, redemption, life, peace and salvation.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, *He* is all that; *He* is all that; *He* is *full* salvation.

**He is all and in all** — Because our Lord Jesus Christ is all this, the church's life must focus itself also completely and solely on Him, the crucified and risen and glorified Christ. From beginning to end, from center to circumference, always and only that life is concerned with personal, living, and active fellowship with Christ. That life, to state the issue in somewhat other words, is always a life *in* and *through* and *with* and *for* and *because of* and *unto* Christ; above all a life *unto Him!*

In the words of Paul the chief concern of the church is to *know* Christ and the power of His resurrection,<sup>11</sup> to be conformed to His image,<sup>12</sup> to live no longer for self but so to live that Christ lives in us.<sup>13</sup>

Or to repeat those richly significant words of the apostle, the issue in the church is that everywhere and always and only Christ shall be *all and in all!*<sup>14</sup>

1. *Heidelberg Catechism*, L.D. XX, qu. 54

2. II Corinthians 5:21

3. I John 2:18

4. I Peter 1:3

5. Cf. for being crucified, dead, buried, resurrected and seated with Christ in the heavenly places, esp. Rom. 6:1-5; 7:4; II Cor. 5:14, 15; Gal. 2:20; Eph. 2:4-6, 14, 15; Col. 1:21-23; 2:13, 14, 20; 3:3-4

6. Cf. Prof. H. Bavinck; *Het Christendom* series *Groote Godsdiensden*, II, 7), p. 23; also *Magnalia Dei*, pp. 263-264

7. Luke 17:21

8. Isaiah 42:6; 49:8

9. I Corinthians 12:12; cf. for "body of Christ: Dr. Herman Ridderbos; *Paulus*, pp. 404-442

10. I Cor. 1:30; John 1:4; 5:26; 15:26; Eph. 2:14; Col. 3:4

11. Philippians 3:10

12. Romans 8:29

13. Galatians 2:20

14. Colossians 3:11

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# THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST

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Jerome M. Julien

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## THE STEPS OF HUMILIATION

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"I believe...in Jesus Christ...who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary; suffered under Pontius Pilate; was crucified, dead, and buried; He descended into hell..." With these words Christians confess that every aspect of Christ's humiliation is vastly important and precious to them. When we speak of Christ's humiliation you will recall that we speak of all that our Savior experienced for us as He was brought low so that He could stand in our place as guilty before the Law of God.

Christ's first step of humiliation for us was that He was

### CONCEIVED... BORN...

The conception which culminated in that birth at Bethlehem was indeed miraculous. It was supernatural. We confess that Jesus was "conceived in the womb of the blessed virgin Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit without the means of man" (*Belgic Confession*, Art. XVIII: cf. Matthew 1:18-20; Luke 1:34, 35; Hebrews 10:5).

Never before had there been a conception like it — never since. Only by the supernatural operation of the Holy Spirit would the virgin birth take place. The activity of man could not be present. God had to act if this child was to be the Son of God. He had to be the fruit of the will of God, not of man. Further, He had to be sinless, and Mary, herself, was not sinless. Thus, for Him to be born without sin the seed had to be planted by the Holy Spirit. And that seed would be kept by that same Spirit's sanctifying influence from all sin through life (John 3:34).

In order to do the work necessary for our salvation this Jesus had to come into the world just as we come into it. It was not a heavenly body which merely came to earth through Mary. Nor was it a separate creation. The sinless One had to assume an earthly, corruptible, weakened, suffering human nature. He was "bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh." Therefore, He *had* to be born of woman.

Indeed, His conception and birth was very important. He had to be conceived and born *without sin* in order to be our Savior since we are conceived and born *in sin*. His redeeming work *began* where our sinfulness begins. The manger at Bethlehem will never be seen properly unless it be seen as related to the cross. Because of this miraculous conception and birth

... He is our Mediator, and with His innocence and perfect holiness covers, in the sight of God, my sin wherein I was conceived and brought forth (*Heidelberg Catechism*, q. 36).

### SUFFERED...

In one word this explains the whole earthly life of our Mediator.

In His birth He suffered. He was wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger (Luke 2:7). Then came the flight into Egypt prompted by the hateful decree of Herod that all male children two years and younger be killed (Matthew 2:13-22). He was tempted by Satan (Matthew 4). He was despised by the Jews who were always in the crowd trying to find a way to bring about His end. With names they ridiculed Him (Matthew 11:19; 9:3; 12:24); with stones they threatened Him (John 8:59); in hate they sought to cast Him headlong over a cliff (Luke 4:29). How clearly the prophet Isaiah had seen it: "He was despised, and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief..." (53:3).

As He moved onward toward death this suffering increased. In the Garden of Gethsemane He was profoundly aware of the suffering which was His (Luke 22:39-46). Then He was betrayed by Judas (Luke 22:48), forsaken by the disciples (Matthew 26:56) and denied by Peter (Luke 22:61). The trials were mockeries of justice. Pilate would judge Him innocent (Luke 23:14). Nevertheless, Jesus would be treated cruelly and finally sent to death!

Jesus on the cross! What a travesty of justice, humanly speaking. Innocent, yet condemned to death on a Roman gibbet — an agonizing death reserved only for the greatest of criminals. What suffering was His!

All of this suffering He experienced in body *and* soul. Of course, as we consider the passion of Jesus Christ we can only shudder at the unmitigated physical suffering He experienced. But He was experiencing God's wrath on sin and His soul was "exceeding sorrowful, even unto death" (Matthew 26:38). It was no masquerade: He really suffered — in body and in soul. But He suffered the infinite wrath of God and came through victoriously because He was sustained by the Holy Spirit.

But why suffer? Would it not have been sufficient for Him to die — and that *only* for our salvation? Remember, Jesus Christ is God's gracious Substitute for the elect. Remember, further, that the curse because of sin includes suffering (Genesis 3:16-19). Besides, remember that while Jesus was innocent of *all* law-breaking He was taking the place of God's elect. And the elect, along with all men have broken the greatest of all laws: God's law.

Therefore, the *Heidelberg Catechism* (q. 37) teaches us to confess

That all the time He lived on earth, but especially at the end of His life, He bore, in body and soul, the wrath of God against the sin of the whole human race, in order that by His

passion, as the only atoning sacrifice, He might redeem our body and soul from everlasting damnation and obtain for us the grace of God, righteousness, and eternal life.

Then, after six dreadful but blessed hours on the cross He

### DIED

On the cross, which was an emblem of God's curse on sin (Galatians 3:13; Deuteronomy 21:23), He breathed His last — He "cried with a loud voice . . . and . . . gave up the ghost" (Luke 23:46).

In His death, the two natures were not separated. The divine nature always remained with the human. Temporarily the human spirit left the human body but the divine nature did not leave Him (*Belgic Confession*, Art. XIX).

Why should He die? God had said to Adam in the Garden, ". . . in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Genesis 2:17). Indeed, ". . . the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). If Christ is to be our Substitute He must also die. After this He was

### BURIED

Christ's "It is finished" marked the end of His active suffering, but there was more. He had to be placed in the grave for us, also, since His burial was a seal upon His death. Even the prophet Isaiah would write of this aspect of humiliation (53:9). Elsewhere, also, there is reference to this (Psalm 16:10; Matthew 12:40; Acts 2:27; 31; 13:34, 35).

But again, why did Jesus have to be buried? Was not His death enough? He was buried as our Substitute. We die and our lifeless corpse is placed in the grave. This is part of the curse — ". . . for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return" (Genesis 3:19)! Of Christ, Ursinus adds, ". . . he was not unwilling to become a corpse for our sake" (*commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism*, under q. 41).

Being buried it would be apparent in Jesus' resurrection that He had overcome death in His own body. His resurrection would be a real bringing back to life of a corpse. While His body remained in the tomb, the corruption of the grave would not touch Him since He had made perfect satisfaction for sin.

For us, Christ's burial means several things. *First*, since Jesus was buried, through Him we put off the old man and we rest from sin (Romans 6:1-6). We are buried with Christ. *Second*, the grave need not terrify the believer, Ursinus adds, "that he has sanctified our graves by his own burial, so that they are no longer graves to us, but chambers and resting places in which we may quietly and peacefully repose until we are again raised to life." *Further*, we know that as the burial was not the end for Christ, so *our* burial will not be the end. There is a future for the body — a glorious future.

### DESCENT INTO HELL

From our earliest catechism training we have been taught to understand this portion of Christ's humiliation in the way it has been explained in the *Compendium*:

. . . that Christ, when He was forsaken by God on the cross, suffered the torments of hell for me.

However, this is not the only way this portion of the creed has been explained. Some have understood it as simply meaning that Christ was in the state of the dead. This they say because the word translated "hell" in our Bibles can also be translated "grave." However, this would make this part of the Creed repetitious. After all, have we not already said that Jesus died and was buried.

The Roman Catholic explanation is that after His death Jesus went to *Limbus Patrum* to appear to the Old Testament saints who had entered death before Him. After preaching the Gospel to these who were awaiting the message of redemption, He led them in victory to heaven. But how can this be if Jesus had not yet been victorious over the grave?

The Lutheran explanation is that Jesus Christ went to hell to demonstrate that He was victorious over Satan and all the powers of darkness. Again, how can He proclaim victory if the resurrection has not yet taken place?

Of course, there are some texts which are used to support these last two views: I Peter 3:18, 19 and 4:4-6. But *neither* teach that Christ went to hell. I Peter 3 speaks about the quickening or life-giving Spirit whereby Christ was preached even to the disobedient of Noah's day; and I Peter 4 speaks of the fact that the Gospel was preached to those who, at the time of writing, were dead, but had heard the Gospel when they were alive.

While Scripture does not explicitly use the words of the Creed, this truth is found there in one way or another. For the Christ, David spoke of hell and all its agony: "The cords of death compassed me, and the pains of Sheol gat hold upon me: I found trouble and sorrow" (Psalm 116:3).

When did all this take place? Certainly not after He died. Before He gasped that last breath He cried, "It is finished" (John 19:30). The work of redemption, the sacrifice of reconciliation was then completed. No more suffering was necessary. His experience of hell could not have been after death. Rather, Jesus was experiencing this on the cross when He cried out "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:46).

Remarking about the importance of this portion of the Creed Calvin writes, "if it is left out, much of the benefit of Christ's death will be lost" (*Institutes*, II, xvi, 8). Indeed, Jesus had to experience hell for me because that is what I should endure because of my sin (Matthew 25:41) were it not for God's grace in salvation.

Perhaps we can best understand the order of the Apostles' Creed here as the order of our experience as Jesus takes our place.

As John Flavel wrote:

Oh let your hearts dwell upon this admirable condescension, till they be filled with it and your lips say Thanks be to God for Jesus Christ (*The Fountain of Life*, 222)! ●



## IV. AN OBEDIENT CHURCH

Peter De Jong

In this series of short articles we have been focusing attention on some basic issues which trouble our churches, by presenting side-by-side (1) the historic, Biblical Reformed view, and (2) the emerging, chang-

ing broadening view held by a growing number of people in our churches. This article directs attention to the church, considering what it means to be an *obedient church*.

### (1) The Biblical, Reformed View

In our time of confusion many are asking whether or why we should have a church at all. The compelling answer is not the usefulness of such a body, but the fact that the Lord said, when Peter confessed Him, "Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven. . . ." (Matt. 16:18, 19).

The Lord's ownership and building of His Church demands that all Christians be part of it and obey Him in it. All members must confess His name before men, as His prophets, priests and kings. Serving Christ by living and laboring together as one body, they are to be the light of the world, glorifying their Father in heaven (Mt. 5:16; 1 Cor. 10:31; Col. 3:17). They must try to win others by bringing the gospel to them. In His Church the Lord has established offices, outlining in His Word the qualifications and duties of each, and giving them the necessary authority, to assist and equip the members of the Church to fulfill their callings in this Christian confession and life (Eph. 4:11-16). Among these offices, the elders of each church are called to rule (Heb. 13:17). Their authority as indicated in the Bible and expressed in our *Church Order* (Art. 27) is original, and is only delegated for cooperative action to larger, representative assemblies.

The Lord demands that we in obedience to Him seek church unity with all who belong to Him (John 17:17-23; Eph. 4:3ff.), and separate from those who reject Him and his gospel (2 Cor. 6:14-7:1; 1 Cor. 5; 2 Thess. 3:6; Acts 18:7; 19:9) both by discipline and, where necessary, by secession. We must labor and pray that the Church may be the "pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Tim. 3:15), and never compromise that truth by tolerating error so as to permit that church to apostatize into a "synagogue of Satan" (Rev. 2:9; 3:9; Mt. 16:23; cf. Westminster Confession XXV, V). The Church and its members, humbly and faithfully serving Christ, know He is King of Kings and Lord of Lords, and will preserve a faithful church, saved, built up, revived and reformed, by His Word and Spirit until He returns in triumph as Victorious Judge and Savior. ●

### (2) The Broadening View

The church although a spiritual fellowship is also a human social institution like others. It is never perfect in this world but is subject to change and development as it must also adjust itself to a changing and developing society. This change is good, as it is directed by the progressive general revelation of God to mankind, as well as through the Bible.

The old, authoritarian views of the church as well as of the Christian life come from an outdated culture which no longer fits in our time. Today we see Christians and churches are called not to rule and obey, but to live and labor together freely and equally in a loving fellowship, each engaged in service following the example of Christ who is the Supreme Servant. Worship and fellowship are to be shared experiences of celebration, in which there is no coercion and each is free to use his or her gifts and have his or her opinions, varied though they may be, welcomed with respect. The church will not, as it mistakenly did in the past, block progress by trying to enforce conformity to old opinions and separate, condemn and discipline, but lovingly seek to help, win and serve all. The church is called not to serve itself and its members, but the world. Its mission, like that of Christ, the Supreme Servant, is to liberate from every kind of oppression and to redeem all of life. Therefore it has a special duty to the poor and economically disadvantaged, and it must cooperate with other liberating movements in society, also where they try to achieve structural changes that will remedy injustice. Sometimes the oppressive structures, resisting change, will have to be broken by force. Even then the church, seeing the Spirit of God working for progress in this way, may be morally bound to support the change.

The offices in the church are functional, to help expedite its service and may be increased or altered as the church may believe will be most helpful. The church must try to win the cooperation of all in its service of mankind. Stubborn, reactionary people, who resist the progressive and liberating programs of the church should be ignored and if they persist in blocking progress, may have to be disciplined. We need to move ahead confident that the Spirit will continue to guide the church and all mankind in building the Kingdom of God. ●

# OBEDIENT TO THE CALL OF DEATH

John Blankespoor

**Go up . . . to Mount Nebo in Moab . . . There on the mountain . . . you will die (Deut. 32:49, 50).**

**So Moses the servant of the Lord died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord. And Moses was a hundred and twenty years old when he died; his eye was not dim, nor his strength abated (Deut. 34:5, 7).**

Strange doings of the Lord!

Moses must die. Here is a man with a world of experience, with tremendous love and devotion for the cause and work of the Lord. He is still a strong man, at 120 years of age. His eye sight was still normal. Even if they had been available, he would not have needed eye glasses to read. He can still do a full day's work. But he must die.

And Moses is obedient. He ascends the mountain and dies. Wonder how he died? Just dropped dead? Did he have a heart arrest? We don't know. But the point is that there is no physical reason for any ailment. He isn't weak or feeble. He isn't even sick. But die he must. Why? There's only one answer, his work is finished.

Time and again Moses is called the *servant* of the Lord. And that he was. What a beautiful description of a man, of his work and life. Religion with him was not a part-time affair, or something he did or had on Sunday alone. The service of the Lord required all his time and efforts.

Isn't this the way all Christians should view their lives? In catechism our children learn the three parts of the Heidelberg Catechism: sin, salvation, and service. Shouldn't therefore everyone who knows the first two parts also know what Christian service is, and that this is our main calling as saved sinners? Naturally this is true of the people in a special office, in special work, such as pastors, missionaries, Christian teachers, and others. But surely it is also, or should also be true for all Christians, parents, husbands and wives, yes, every Christian. Someone once said, "To serve as a Christian is to live, everything else is dying."

There is always so much work to be done in the kingdom, in the home, school and church, and also in the community and for our neighbor, who may be a widow, or poor, or have some other need. How sad that so much we live for ourselves, and that retirement is considered to be a constant vacation, whether we spend it at home or half of the year in the sunny south. Only too often older people retire from spiritual service. After all, they have done enough, let the younger generation take over. That's how they often talk. Is it perhaps because they know so little of the need and also the joy of Christian service? Even when we become old and feeble we are called to Christian service. Perhaps we can do no more than witness, but this is a tre-

mendous task. Don't underestimate it. Never, never should the older people think or say, there's nothing left for us to do. Many, many sick beds have become tremendous "pulpits."

Well, Moses was a servant of the Lord. So he lived and so he died. Now the Lord is calling him to better and perfect service above. And as with Moses, so with us. He didn't die because he was sick. No, he died because his work was finished. God naturally always uses means with us, some die because of an accident, another one has cancer, a third one a heart attack. But these are all means in God's hand. Christians die because their life and work is finished. Such people the angels usher into the perfect service of heaven, with and for the Lord.

But Moses is *called* to die. He must be willing to die, and submit to this call of the Lord. What a call! Throughout his life he had been called in a hundred and one ways. Called, then here, then there. And when God calls we have to give an answer. And who wants to die?

Sometimes He calls us to die in a special way, when for example we have an incurable disease and we have exploited every possible means for recovery. To such people the Lord says, "I am calling you to die." He wants us to go willingly in such circumstances. But this call to die comes to all people gradually as they grow older. The usual way is that people retire at a given age of life. So many people look forward to this. Usually most people still feel quite well when they have reached retirement age, and everybody wishes them a long and happy retirement. Wonderful. But as time goes on and their lives are spared, infirmities of the body become more apparent, and weaknesses become more pronounced. What all this really means also, is that the Lord is gradually calling them to die. He wants us to grow old graciously, willing, and to be willing to get ready to die. And that's not all bad. In fact it is not bad at all. Death will be gain for such Christians. In heaven we will have the joy of serving Him perfectly.

But it makes all the difference how we have lived and are living. Remember, Moses is called a *servant* of the Lord. It is for those who know by experience and make it their goal to live a life of service and love for their Lord, to be able to view their death as a call to better service above. On the other hand, for people whose life has been a pursuit for worldly gains and material possessions and a living for self, that death will be the greatest catastrophe that will ever overtake them.

Moses is called to die. So are we. At first it was difficult for Moses to give heed to this call. This giant of faith wrestled with it. Later, Lord, not now

yet. So he reasoned, and talked. How much he would want to enter the land of Canaan with the Israelites. He prayed and prayed. Finally the Lord told him not to pray for this anymore. And he became submissive. What kind of answer will you give, or are you giving to this call now?

In faith Moses went, obedient to the call. Wonder how that went? Did he perhaps say goodbye, bid farewell to his hosts of friends? If so, they no doubt asked him, "Where are you going Moses?" And he replied, "I'm going up Mount Nebo and die." That kind of answer must have been astounding. Did he then just leave them and walk towards the mountain? Quite likely. And thousands possibly watched him go, with much sadness and teary eyes. Finally they can see him no more, that great man of God, who is obedient to the final call in life. Marvelous faith!

Of course in all this Moses is only a shadow of the great Son of God. And a shadow is not much. It really has no substance at all. So Christ is everything compared with the shadows, even the giants in faith. What a great Savior He is, the very Son of God. If Moses' obedience to this call was great, consider

that the obedience of our Lord was infinitely greater. His whole life was one of perfect service, the service of love for His people. He was called to die the death of the cross, the death of hell. And obedient He was.

On the mountain Moses is given special vision to see the whole land of promise. What a land it is. No, he may not enter, but he may see it. Even though he surely went to heaven, at this stage he is forbidden entrance into the earthy Canaan. He, too, has sinned. He must remain outside, that rebels like those Israelites may enter in. Again do we see Christ, who was cast out, that we may enter in, forever.

But Moses may see it. And we sing, "By faith we can see it afar." Many Christians on their death beds have been given the faith to see the other side of the "Jordan," the inexpressible glories of heaven. They are those who in life knew the Lord and what it means to live in Christian service in the different phases of the life of the kingdom.

O God, give us grace that we may give heed to the call *now*, and know what it really means to lose ourselves in love for our Lord. ●

## Church Growth and the CRC (I)

Neal Hegeman

### Definition

Church growth is the gracious action of God and the response of man in the formation of a Church community. The Church is the called community of God's people whom God predestined from eternity to belong to him. The members of the Church are saved through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and gathered into the Church through the operation of the Holy Spirit. The growth of the Church is measured by recording the number of persons being baptized and confessing their faith, as well as recording those who reject their confession or who depart from the earthly church through death.

When we speak of Church growth we are primarily concerned with the New Testament Church. It was recorded that within the first days of its conception the Church grew from 120-3,000-5,000 souls. This number included both men, women and children as we learn from the promise in Acts 2:37f. and the practise of household baptisms. In the subsequent chapters of Acts we also read of Church loss through martyrdom, death and excommunications. In the book of Revelation we see that 7 churches were on the verge of losing membership in the Church of Christ due to doctrinal heresy, immorality and apathy.

Counting Church growth within the Reformed tradition in the modern world is more detailed than in the missionary context of the New Testament.

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We measure evangelism growth (new converts), transfer in growth, (from other denominations) and natural growth (children of believers who are baptized). We measure Church loss by counting those who transferred out or lost their membership through excommunication, resigning, lapsing their membership or having their membership erased. Death also counts as loss.

We are faced with the extra problem of trying to determine what is the true and false Christian Church. The Reformed Tradition has used the three marks as found in the Belgic Confession as the marks which the true Church must have. They involve the true preaching of the Word, the proper administration of sacraments and the exercise of Church discipline. On this account we do not consider the RCC as a true Church and we must constantly examine our own denomination and congregations as to whether or not the marks of the presence of Christ's Spirit are still with us.

### Church Growth in the Book of Acts.

Luke, the human author of the book of Acts makes use of numerical Church growth statistics. He makes frequent mention of Church growth, especially toward the conclusions and endings of the various divisions within the book of Acts. Luke does not only mention membership growth but closely associates growth of the Word and Work of the Holy Spirit with Church growth. From Acts 1:8 we see that the book can be divided geographically, as the Spirit and the Church move from geographical boundary to geographical boundary. We divide the book as follows,

keeping in mind Luke's concluding remarks about the growth of the Church in each of these particular regions.

1. Church growth in Jerusalem (1:1-6:7).
2. Church growth in Judea, Galilee and Samaria (6:8-9:13).
3. Church growth among Gentiles (9:32-12:25).
4. Church growth in Asia Minor (13:1-16:5).
5. Church growth in Greece and Asia Minor (16:6-19:20).
6. Church growth in Greece, Europe, and Rome (19:21-end).

Near the end of these sections Luke summarizes and reports numerical and spiritual growth.

"And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem." (Acts 6:7a).

"So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was built up; and walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit it was multiplied" (Acts 9:31).

"But the word of God grew and multiplied" (Acts 12:24).

"So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and they increased in numbers daily" (Acts 16:5).

"So the word of the Lord grew and prevailed mightily" (Acts 19:20).

"Let it be known to you then that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will listen" (Acts 28:28).

We notice that numerical growth is associated with the growth of the work of God's Spirit and knowledge of the Word of God. Both of these activities happen within the Church and make for Church growth.

### The CRC and Church Growth

We praise the Lord that out of a few seceders, the Lord has raised a branch of the Reformed tradition in North America called the Christian Reformed Church (CRC). We can speak of Church growth in the CRC because God has added to our number, which in 1979 totalled 292,379. There are aspects of our Church growth, however that have troublesome overtones, which we must seriously consider.

Total growth has not increased very much in the last 2 decades. Membership stands at 292,379 this year, but had stayed within the 280,000 range from 1968-1978. Several growth factors can be examined in relation to this slow growth.

Evangelism growth is very low with a slight drop this year. The traditional approach to evangelism had been the chapel and storefront mission approach. Success was moderate. Now we have largely abandoned that approach and our success has been even worse. It must be said that most of the evangelism growth has been in some congregations in the CRC, which means that many show no growth whatsoever.

The leadership in the CRC have proposed different alternatives to chapel, and mission approaches. These have been through the organized

Church and involve bringing people into the established Church. In 1973 Key 73 was launched. Evangelism growth that year dropped over 200 persons. In 1978 the "I Found It" campaign was endorsed by the leaders of the CRC in evangelism, and follow up statistics show that less than 1/2 of 1% of church growth can be attributed to that. Presently CET is in progress and evangelism growth in 1979 showed a drop from 1978. Perhaps the statistics are not related to the new approaches, and perhaps the statistics would be worse if these efforts were not made, but still we are not meeting the evangelism needs around us. A rather successful approach has been the Bible study groups which have met during coffee breaks, in homes and churches.

We can learn from our failures and successes in evangelism. With Luke we must conclude that the Word and Work of the Spirit through the Church must be manifested at a personal level. The Bible Study groups do just that. Our tradition has been stripped of many of its evangelistic tools, such as the chapel, men's and ladies' societies and even adult education programs. We must recapture what we've lost and seek to implement our church life so that others can participate.

Another troublesome area of Church growth has been the movement of the city churches to the suburbs. If churches moved for economic reasons, one wonders what sort of responsibility these churches have to the neighborhood they evacuated. Often when the church moved the prominent members of the church moved as well. Only the poor, elderly and visionary people stayed behind and the vacuum of the departing middle class was filled by poor white and black, workers, welfare recipients and students alike. The saddening aspect of this development is that the Church moved and did not leave its witness behind in the form of a chapel or mission church. There was no concept of the parish, having a responsibility to the neighborhood in which the church was. I live in such a destitute neighborhood, where the CRC and RCA moved but the Spirit didn't. Now the Spirit is using the willing fundamental and charismatic type groups in order to meet the needs of this neighborhood. Would that we would move with the Spirit of God rather than the spirit of this world, whether it be manifested in materialism or racism. When we start moving with the Spirit of God we will encounter many different peoples, to whom the Spirit is bring God's plan of redemption. Acts 2 will not only be history but reality.

Another area of concern is church growth and loss through doctrinal controversies. In 1979 the Orthodox CRC in Canada and the United Reformed congregations were formed due to doctrinal difficulties in the Church. We know we lose members through this process but will we gain? Will the a-historical views as expressed by Dr. Verhey and others lead toward church growth? Will our tampering with the historical and doctrinal truths of Scripture strengthen us or divide us? We need only look at the Lutheran, Presbyterian, Episcopalian and Congregational Churches around us for an answer. Biblical and theological liberalism destroys and

splits the church and does not produce church growth. Hyper-conservatism, on the other hand does not readily lead itself to church growth, if it takes a sectarian form. We desperately need a return to the Biblical Christianity as we see in Acts where the Church grew because it was faithful and fruitful in God's Word and Work.

The bright spot in CRC Church growth was the increase in transfers in from other denominations. Perhaps we should thank the young people, the newlyweds for that. More couples stay within the Church than leave it for another denomination.

The largest source of church growth is through children born of CRC parents. This birth rate, however, is not increasing or as high as in the post WW II era. The CRC is largely a stable, self-replenishing, homogeneous unit which can survive by its birthrate alone. That however doesn't balance the cultural mandate with the evangelism mandate (Mt. 28:16f).

In following articles I will deal with church growth in Canada, Mexico, Central America and the Caribbeans, for I have personal contact with these areas. ●

## Reprobation and Boer's Gravamen

Dr. Harry Boer submitted to the 1977 CRC Synod a gravamen in which at the outset he states: "I submit herewith for synodical *examination* and *adjudication* a gravamen against the Reformed doctrine of reprobation as taught notably in the Canons of Dort, Chapter I, Article 6 and Chapter I, Article 15..." In the closing sentence of his gravamen, Dr. Boer adds: "I submit herewith for synodical *examination* and *adjudication* this gravamen... against what I judge to be a grievously and un-biblical, therefore unReformed, indeed unChristian doctrine." This matter will be on the *Agenda* of the forthcoming 1980 CRC Synod.

**Response** — Over against Dr. Boer's denial of the historic doctrine of Reprobation, a number of quotations may be adduced from various sources. Cited in this issue is an excerpt from *The Doctrine of God* by Herman Bavinck (Translated from the Dutch by Dr. William Hendriksen) pages 394, 395:

"Viewed in the light of the all comprehensive character of God's counsel, it is perfectly proper to speak of a 'double predestination.' Sin, unbelief, death, and eternal punishment are the object of God's government as well as are all things. Not only

is it true that reducing 'predestination' at this point to a mere 'foreknowledge and permission' avails nothing, but it is also a fact that Scripture speaks very plainly and positively. It is true that the Bible does not make frequent mention of reprobation as an eternal decree. All the more, however, is reprobation represented as an act of God which becomes manifest in the history of the world. God rejects Cain, Gen. 4:5; curses Canaan, Gen. 9:25; sends Ishmael away, Gen. 21:12; Romans 9:7; Gal. 4:30; hates Esau, Gen. 25:26; Mal. 1:2 and 3; Romans 9:13; Heb. 12:17; suffered the nations to walk in their own ways, Acts 14:16. Even within the circle of special revelation mention is often made of God's rejection of His people and of certain definite persons, Deut. 29:28; I Sam. 15:23, 26; 16:1; II Kings 17:20; II Kings 23:27; Psalm 53:5; 78:67; 89:38; Jer. 6:30... But in that negative act of rejection a positive divine deed often reveals itself. This positive deed is described as: hatred, Mal. 1:2, 3; Romans 9:13; cursing, Gen. 9:25; hardening, Ex. 7:3; 4:21; 9:12...; obduration, I Kings 12:15; II Sam. 17:14... blinding and deafening, Isa. 6:9; Math. 13:13..."

J.V.P.

## Is Capital Punishment Obligatory in the Case of Murder?

A CRC synodically-appointed committee consisting of Doctors Henry Stob, Hessel Bouma III, Stephen Monsma, Clarence Vos, and Louis Vos have presented a report on Capital punishment (Acts of Synod 1979, pages 468-508) which report has been referred to the churches for study, reflection and response to the study committee by October 15, 1980... The committee is to report further to the Synod of 1981. The report before the churches recommends that the CRC Synod declare:

"a. That the Scriptures *lay no mandate* on modern states to exercise capital punishment.

"b. That the Scriptures *do permit* modern states to inflict capital punishment.

"c. That according to the spirit of Scripture capital punishment is prudently exercised only under extreme conditions and not as a general rule." (italics added).

**Response** — Over against this denial of the historic position of Reformed Christendom a number of quotations may be adduced from various

sources. Translated from the Dutch, the following excerpts are from Dr. Abraham Kuyper's well-known work on the Heidelberg Catechism, *E Voto Dordraceno* (meaning: in agreement with the wish at the Synod of Dort) Volume IV, pages 118, 119:

"Thus we do not plead for capital punishment as a deed of necessity for the disturbed citizenry, or as an example to instill fear, or as a satisfaction for the feeling of society for vengeance, but only and exclusively because God has commanded it, and that He has declared that His honor demands capital punishment for the murderer. Naturally, in this the authorities here on earth must distinguish between actual murder and the unintentional killing of someone or a killing due to personal necessity; in which the ordinance of God that the actual murderer must die is not to be weakened. This is, to be sure, more than a law of the Medes and the Persians. It is a command directly from God."

J.V.P.

# WHO'S BOSS?

Cecil Tuininga

Have you ever been asked the question: Who wears the pants in your home? I think everybody recognizes its meaning. Its another way of asking: Who's boss in your home, father or mother? Questions like that generally raise a chuckle or two, but they are far from innocent. Back of them is the assumption, very wrongly, that someone must be the boss in a home. Also, that at times a woman is actually the boss who runs the whole show. Or even the assumption that a man ought to be the boss who runs the whole show. In either case, that is, for either to be a boss would spell out a loveless home. There should never be a boss in a home.

That question: Who wears the pants? has, I assume, an interesting history. It wasn't so long ago that women wouldn't be caught in public wearing pants. On the farm some women would wear jeans for the convenience in the work they were doing, and as a good guard against mosquitoes. But in public, never! The Bible said it was wrong for a woman to wear man's clothing, and since the Bible said so a woman did not wear men's pants. And this was the more so because Scripture said that "the Lord your God detests anyone who does this" (Deut. 22:5). Since a man was to be the head of the house, and since a man wore pants, to wear pants came to identify one as the head of the home. But how being head of a home became identified with being boss is another story. It is however very wrong to equate headship with being boss.

There is an interesting background to the word "boss" according to the book "Why you say it." The author, Webb B. Garrison, claims that "Dutch employers of a few centuries ago were noted for their easygoing nature. So no objection was raised when those who worked for them addressed them familiarly as BAAS (uncle). Gradually the word came to be the equivalent of 'overseer' or 'superior.' When early settlers established themselves in the New World, the word accompanied them. English colonists, who had paid a dear price for freedom, resented both the old form of authority and the very terms in which they were expressed. They were not only unwilling to remain subjects of the king but also resented his representatives. Many colonists objected to the very word 'master.' So early New Englanders, thrown into contact with the Dutch, adopted their word BAAS — taking it over with the spelling slightly altered. The typically American term BOSS therefore stands as one more monument to the independent spirit of the founding fathers."

Perhaps, if wearing the pants means boss in that sense, it wouldn't be all that bad. But boss has come to be equated with master, foreman, administrator. It means today someone who calls the shots and is obeyed. In our modern understanding of the word there is to be no boss in any home. We must not confuse our modern understanding of the word boss with the Scriptural teaching that a man is the head of the woman. They have nothing in common. Per-

haps because they are so often identified, and in some cases headship is practised in the way of being a master calling all the shots, that they became synonyms in our thinking. That needs correction.

In this age of women's liberation, wrongly so-called, we have to take a careful look at what God's Word says about man being the head of the woman. The rebellion now going on in the world is neither Scriptural nor liberating. You may object to such a statement, because what is not in harmony with God's Word cannot possibly be liberating. With that we can only agree. But even from a purely secular worldly viewpoint, the women's liberation movement can only work for the degradation of women. Man cannot flaunt God's order and find happiness. That only brings more unhappiness.

Strangely enough Christians today are being influenced by this movement. Women are people too, so we are reminded. As though the Lord's people were learning something new. And since women are people, just like men are people, they supposedly have the same rights as men. No quarrel with that, I am sure. But implied is that they also have the same functions in society, or at least are entitled to the same functions as a man. The reasoning goes something like this: If a man has a right to smoke, so has a woman. If a man can go out to get employment, so can a woman. If a man enjoys driving a truck, a woman should be entitled to the same enjoyment. If a man can be a foreman, so can a woman. If a man can be head of a household, so can the woman, etc., etc. Such reasoning overlooks the fact that God created man and woman with a difference that must be honored. Both have a calling from the Lord. Both must fulfill that calling unto the Lord. And in the fulfilling of their God-given callings they must always keep the God-given distinctions in view, that man is called by God to be head of the woman, and that both are called to differing functions in life. The man is called to be provider (1 Tim. 5:8) the woman to be a mother and housekeeper (1 Tim. 2:15; 1 Tim. 5:14).

Now I am, as the saying goes, opening a can of worms. I can hear a thousand arguments that have accumulated through the years. Most of them I see as inspired by satan, because they look at housekeeping and childbearing as the menial lot of women, something to get away from if at all possible. Women are people too with a right to use their talents in careers of their choice, etc. etc. But I hear Scripture say that the most glorious of all careers for any woman is to be a mother and homemaker. I hear God's Word exalting a woman in her beautiful and high calling as one who can bring forth life for and unto the Lord. No career can compare to that. No honor is higher. No woman is more blessed of God than the one who finds joy in motherhood and housekeeping. The Bible tells us so.

Now you wonder what this all has to do with being a boss or a head in a home. Everything! We must let

God's Word show us the beauty of the relationship in which He has placed man and woman, husband and wife. Scripture has much to say about this in many places, but let us limit ourselves to Ephesians 5:21-33. In this passage wives are called to be "subject" to their husbands because they are the heads, and the husbands are called to love their wives. Scripture gives an example, the example of Jesus Christ our Saviour. As the Church is subject to Christ, so wives must be subject to their husbands in everything. Husbands are called to love their wives as Christ loved His Church and gave himself for It. That relationship is both beautiful and liberating. Where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty. When a man truly loves a woman in the Lord, and cares for her as the Lord calls him to do, then the woman's calling to be subject to him in all things is made very easy and wonderful. Surely then we know that Scripture nowhere intimates that a man is to be a boss to his wife or family. He is to be devoted head and father. But then it is also clear that no woman may be the head. There are no exceptions here. This does not mean that if a man cannot manage or run affairs that a woman may not help him. I believe she is called as a helper to do just that. But in and through that she is called by God to be "subject" to her less gifted husband. The Lord demands that for the maintenance of a blessed marriage relationship.

I am writing these few lines for young people. I already know how some react to something like this. One says: Marriage is far from my mind right now. I'm only dating! Another says: A young person shouldn't get serious right away when going out with someone! And some laugh at you when you suggest that courting is a serious matter, and who you go out with is of the utmost importance. Unfortunately it is all too common, that young people don't take dating seriously and see it as a step towards Christian marriage. It is just exactly that. If you wouldn't marry the person you date, you shouldn't date that person.

But there is something more to this. How do you see your future life in marriage? What kind of a partner do you want? Do you really desire, and pray for, a marriage only in the Lord? That consideration has to motivate our whole dating and courting time. Parents are not always as helpful as they should be.

The attitude of many seems to be: let young people have some fun, and let them go out with differing young people. So What? Until Jane becomes intensely interested in a Johnny that will make an unequally yoked union in marriage. Then all of a sudden trouble brews, quarrels erupt, and Jane elopes with Johnny. Or if developments are not that radical, at least another mixed-marriage is on the books, spelling trouble.

So young people must be taught to seek a marriage only in the Lord (1 Cor. 7:39). And to build a home after the godly pattern set out in Ephesians 5:21-33. Only such a marriage will be happy and endure.

Which brings up another aspect of this marriage question. What kind of form will you use for your marriage? It seems to be fashionable in these days to make our own forms, and some of these leave much wanting. Even the new form Synod 1979 adopted leaves much wanting. Those who choose to use such forms say something about what kind of a marriage they want, and what kind of married life they desire. You see, women's liberation even influences our marriage forms. In our marriage forms we are saying as much as: No one is going to be head in this home. We are going to be equal partners. No subjection to husbands, and no maintenance for wives. We stand on an equal footing! When we say that in our vows we are leaving out what is really the ingredient for a successful marriage prescribed by God. Yes, the new form says something about this in the explanation of marriage, but the vows dismiss this entirely. Allow me to say this once again. When we choose to use forms like this we are laying a foundation for a marriage that cannot be blessed of the Lord.

So much more can and should be said about this whole question, but I will leave it with this. I would appreciate comments or questions so that this whole important matter may become very clear in the minds of our parents and young people. It is so important that we see this clearly that marriage is not a matter of one or the other being boss, neither is it a matter of equal partnership, but rather a union patterned after that of Christ and His Church. ●

*Rev. Cecil Tuininga is pastor of the Grande Prairie-La Glace C.R. Church in Alberta, Canada.*

*This article also appeared in the publication of our Canadian affiliate. The Reformed Review of March, 1980.*



#### SILENCE IS ASSENT

The Dr. Verhey Case centers on the statement that the serpent did not speak as reported in the third chapter of Genesis and that there was no earthquake as recorded in Matthew 27:51: "And the earth did quake and the rocks rent."

These are the teachings and assertions of Prof. Verhey.

Silence is assent. These ASSERTIONS of Verhey are all well known. ESPECIALLY THE MINISTERS and CONSISTORY of the Neland Ave. Christian Reformed Church and the Professors of Calvin Seminary and College, who are members of the Neland Avenue C.R.C., for they are in-

involved by token of their membership and in agreement by their silence.

Assent in my dictionary means to admit as true, concede, agree to, consent, acquiescence, approval. You don't have to say ANYTHING. But when you belong to the same church and classis, you are involved and your silence is assent. In the Verhey case any person involved would either speak against Verhey's false assertions, or by his silence show agreement, his assent.

Have any of the consistory members of Neland Ave. C.R.C. protested? They claim to have considered the case. By their silence they assent.

What about several Seminary Professors (and maybe College too) who ARE

MEMBERS of the Neland Avenue Church? Several of them attended Synod. Not one voice of protest. Their silence must be considered agreement and assent with Verhey's statements. What about the Classis and Synod? One professor openly agreed with Verhey's statements, as was reported.

Some stood up and protested when this case was before Synod in 1979, but the rest either by their silence, or vote, agreed with Verhey — NO serpent as stated in Genesis 3 spoke, and the Lord did NOT speak to the serpent. — NO earthquake as recorded in Matthew 27:51. I guess the veil was not rent either. Only a few at Synod stood up for the truth, the Bible, the validity, the inerrancy of the Bible. Thanks to God for these Gideonites. I stand here with them.

Where are the voices of protest from Churches, Classis or members? What has become of our Seminary? The Seminary professors used to be the defenders of the faith.

If Verhey is right that we need not accept as really true what has happened, namely, no serpent, no earthquake, then what about other passages of Scripture. — Balaam's ass did not really speak. — The lost hatchet did not come up from the deep water in Elisha's day. — The whale of Jonah did not exist. — Christ had no miraculous birth. — The Bible is not reliable. — Salvation is not sure. — God's promises not reliable. The believer is then the most miserable of all people. Is the Christian Reformed Church just accepting Verhey's assertions by its silence? This is a censurable sin.

**SILENCE IS ASSENT.**

Rev. E. Kooistra  
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**TRUE COMFORT**

*"What is thine only comfort,  
O Christian, on life's way?"  
"That I've a faithful Savior  
Who leads me day by day."*

*"What is thine only comfort?"  
"Ah, this — He died for me;  
He took my sin upon Himself  
So that I might go free."*

*"What is thine only comfort  
In death, if it should come?"  
"That I will go to dwell with Him  
In our eternal home."*

Annetta Jansen  
Dorr, MI

## Twelve Theses on Reprobation

Edwin H. Palmer\*

This is an excellent article on the issue coming before synod this year. It is written clearly so that the layman can understand it. The Reformed Fellowship Editorial Committee was not able to place it in the Outlook due to its length. We do feel that each delegate to synod should read it and therefore we are printing a limited number of copies in separate pamphlet form. The following twelve subheads give a good indication of how this subject has been treated:

### Twelve Theses on Reprobation

Edwin H. Palmer

**Definition:** Reprobation is God's eternal, sovereign, unconditional, immutable, wise, holy and mysterious decree whereby, in electing some to eternal life, he passes others by, and then justly condemns them for their own sin — all to his own glory.

1. The Bible is the infallible, inerrant Word of God and is the final arbiter in all teaching, including reprobation.
2. God is holy; he is the absolute antithesis of sin, and a hater of evil.
3. Although sin and unbelief are contrary to what God commands (his preceptive will), God has included them in his sovereign decree (ordained them, caused them to certainly come to pass).
4. Historically, many, but not all, theologians have spoken of two parts of reprobation: 1. preterition and 2. condemnation.
5. Reprobation as preterition is unconditional and as condemnation is conditional.
6. Preterition is the reverse side of election.
7. God does not effectuate sin and unbelief in the same way he effectuates good deeds and faith.
8. Objections to the teaching of reprobation are usually based on scholastic rationalism rather than humble submission to the Word of God.
9. It is wrong to expect the Bible to give a systematic theological treatise of reprobation.
10. A person does not know if he is reprobate but he may know if he is elect.
11. Reprobation should be preached.
12. Ignorance is learned.

Anyone who wishes may write for copies at \$1.50 each (while they last) to:

Reformed Fellowship  
4855 Starr St., S.E.  
Grand Rapids, MI 49506

\*Dr. Palmer is Editor of the N.I.V. Bible.