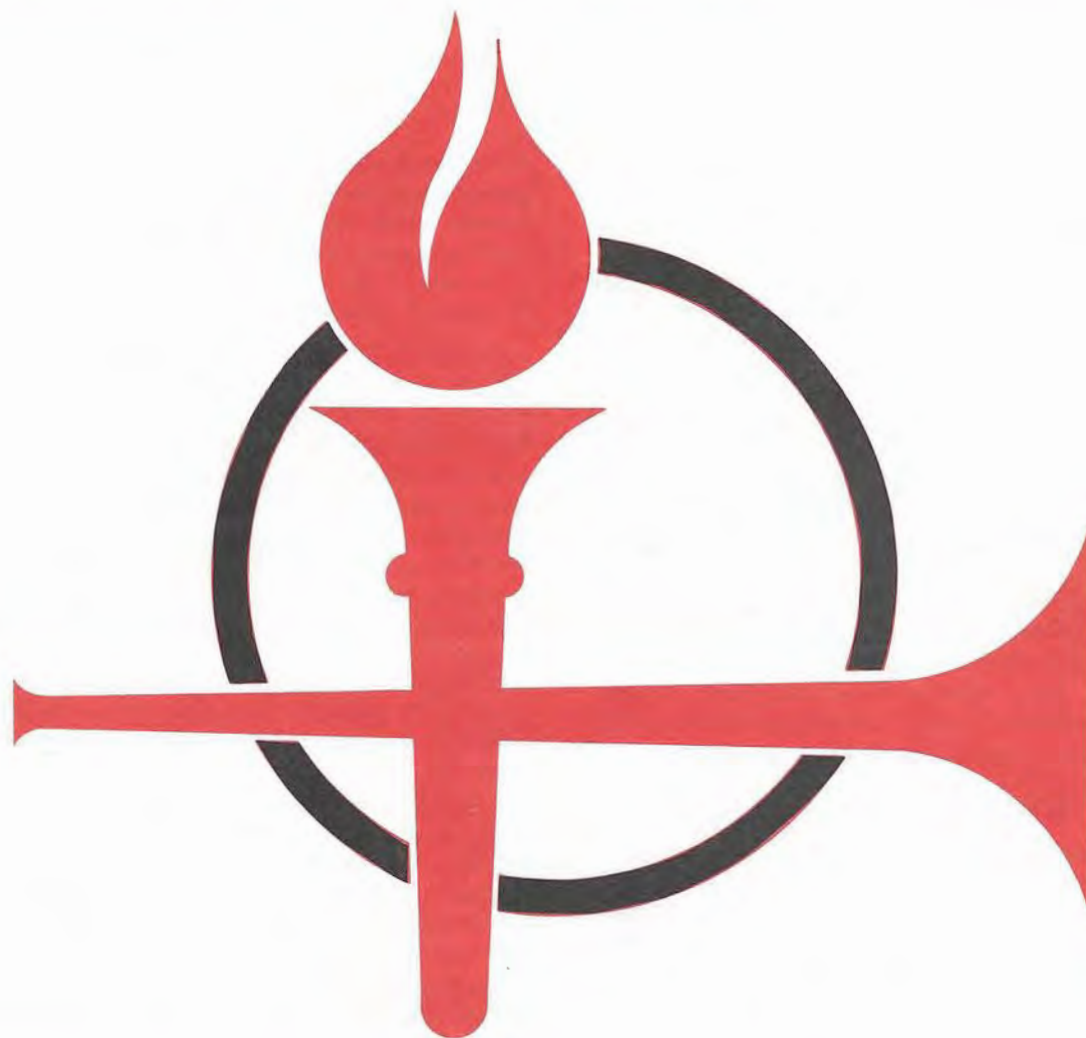


THE OUTLOOK

DEVOTED TO THE EXPOSITION AND DEFENSE OF THE REFORMED FAITH

AUGUST 1980



**REPORT ON CR SYNOD
TRIBUTE TO D. MARTYN LLOYD JONES
WHAT IS SALVATION?**

Report on SYNOD

Harlan Vanden Einde

The Synod of 1980 is now history. Though the agenda for this year was not as "hefty" as in some previous years, there was a considerable amount of material with which the delegates were asked to deal. It makes you wonder, after it's all over, if all matters were as carefully considered as they should be in a so relatively short period of time. The following is an attempt to give a brief review of the major decisions of the Synod of 1980.

The Brookside Christian Reformed Church was in charge of the Prayer Service held on June 9th. The Rev. Dale Vander Veen, pastor of Brookside Church, conducted the service, and charged the delegates to seek "wisdom" for the forthcoming days of deliberation. He also conducted the opening session of synod on Tuesday morning, during which time the following officers of synod were elected: President, Rev. Jacob Eppinga; Vice-President, Rev. Calvin Bolt; First Clerk, Rev. Martin Geleynse; and Second Clerk, Rev. Edward Knott. Synod then adjourned in favor of the meeting of its advisory committees.

Wednesday, June 11

While a good part of Wednesday was also spent in committee work, there were a few matters which came to the floor of synod for discussion and decision. The Committee on Educational Matters presented a rather lengthy list of those appointed and reappointed to staff positions at Calvin College. To this delegate, it seemed as if such important matters were treated rather routinely, but neither do I have a suggested way of making such appointments more meaningful.

The Committee on Synodical Services also presented a report with several recommendations. One recommendation of interest was that pertaining to the appointment of study committees by synod. In 1979, the rule was adopted that all study committees shall be appointed by synod from a nomination made by the advisory committee which drafted the mandate, with the advice of the officers of synod. Since

in that same synod, there was some confusion in implementing this decision, now this sentence was added: "The reporter of the advisory committee shall present the nominations on the floor of synod." It is hoped that this will prevent the last minute "juggling" of study committee members.

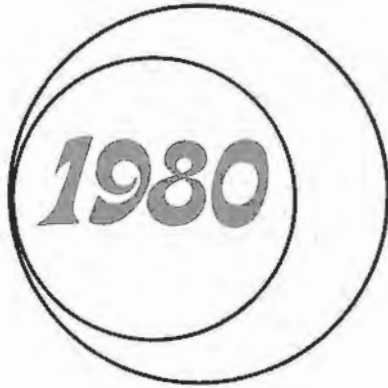
Another recommendation adopted makes it possible for ministers to retire at the age of sixty-two, with the approval of the classis involved, at a reduced rate of pension adopted by the Synod of 1978.

A new statement of membership for use in transferring members within the denomination and to churches in ecclesiastical fellowship was also adopted. This same form "may" be used when a member chooses to affiliate with a church not in ecclesiastical fellowship. There is little uniformity in practice among our churches in this matter of "transferring" members, particularly in regard to those who affiliate with churches not in ecclesiastical fellowship, and this decision will not do much to help this situation.

From this committee also came a recommendation to appoint a committee to plan an appropriate observance of the 125th anniversary of our denomination. As the President of synod commented, it doesn't seem that long ago that we celebrated our 100th anniversary.

During the Wednesday evening session, a considerable amount of time was spent debating the recommendation of the Board of Publications that the board be "authorized to create an advisory position on the Education Committee to be filled by a qualified person from the Reformed Church in America in 1980." This "expanded ministry," as mentioned in the supporting grounds, was compared by one delegate to a balloon which gets bigger and bigger while the substance gets thinner and thinner. Howbeit, the recommendation passed, and it was followed by the adoption of a recommendation "to create a similar advisory position . . . to be filled by a Presbyterian person of one of the NAPARC churches in 1981." Do we really want our Board of Publications to produce good, usable material for use in our churches,

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or are we going into mass production for other denominations? It seems we have *taken another step in the direction of joint publication of these materials to accommodate other denominations.*

Thursday, June 12

The opening session on Thursday was declared executive session in order for synod to deal with a matter presented by the Judicial Code Committee. Though previously there were those who were skeptical of the implementation of such a Judicial Code, it appeared to this delegate as if the committee used and applied the code very effectively and with great diligence in this case.

Twenty-seven young men were declared candidates for the ministry, with eight others also so declared upon completion of certain academic requirements. This is always a real highlight of synod, as it was again this year, especially later on in the day when the candidates with their wives were called to the platform, and given a brief charge by Rev. Thomas Vanden Heuvel. Some time was spent debating the matter of one candidate who was committed to receiving a call to a church other than Christian Reformed—a church with which we are in ecclesiastical fellowship. The arguments favoring this procedure appeared to be rather weak, but the recommendation passed. Does candidacy mean one is available for call by one of our churches, or does it mean satisfactory completion of the course of study at Calvin Seminary?

Rev. John Van Ryn was reappointed for four years to the position of Executive Secretary of the Board of Home Missions. Rev. Dirk Hart was given a two-year appointment as Minister of Evangelism, replacing Rev. Wesley Smedes who retires from that position. Note was taken that the Board of Home Missions is now beginning its second hundred years of ministry on behalf of the Christian Reformed Church.

A rather significant decision was made when synod *decided to adopt the concept of establishing a Classis of Indian Churches.* Full details of the plan

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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are still to be worked out in terms of modifying the Church Order to fit the unique character of this classis, such plan to be submitted to the Synod of 1981. Some delegates were not convinced that this is the best way to integrate our Indian brothers and sisters into the full life and fellowship of the denomination, but our prayer is that the plan presented for adoption next year will be for the well-being of the Indian churches and the entire denomination.

A couple of other appointments were made on Thursday afternoon: Dr. Harvey Smit to the position of Director of Education and Theological Editor for the Board of Publications for two years; and Rev. William Haverkamp as editor of *De Wachter* for three years, a position in which he has rendered valuable service for many years.

The entire evening session on Thursday was spent in discussion of the report on *Marriage Guidelines*. The report contains three major divisions, Part I - Biblical Teaching Regarding Marriage; Part II - Biblical Teaching Regarding Divorce and Remarriage; and Part III - Guidelines for the Ministry of the Church. The first recommendation before the house regarding this report was that "synod accept sections I and II of this report as being basically in accord with the biblical teachings on marriage, divorce and remarriage." By request of one of the delegates, the question was divided, so that sections I and II could be voted on separately, but that did not change the outcome of the vote. Both recommendations carried. It was stated that the word "accept" is less binding than the word "adopt," and it was interpreted by one of the members of the study committee to mean "an acceptable framework within which to work out the guidelines."

It is my understanding that no consistory is "bound" to the exegesis of the passages discussed in these first two sections, but that this is the framework from which the guidelines have been developed. It is my judgment that though there may be weaknesses in this report, it is *better than the one presented in 1977* in that there is *no suggestion that there be a broad interpretation of adultery or infidelity, on the basis of which a divorce may be called "biblical."*

Section III, containing the guidelines for pastors, consistories and churches re: matters of marriage, divorce and remarriage, was also adopted. In this instance, the word "adopt" was used rather than "accept," which supposedly makes these guidelines more "binding" than the two previous sections of the report. Yet, they are still called "guidelines." And it is obvious that not every answer to every question of every consistory for every case is to be found in these guidelines, nor could any report of any length ever give us that.

Friday, June 13

The *Liturgical Committee* presented synod with a collection of *prayers* which are now referred to the churches for *study* and *provisional use* for three years. There was considerable discussion on this matter, and it was stated from the floor by one delegate that some of these prayers are tinted with

weak sentimentality. Those who pleaded the strongest for their adoption argued that these are not mandatory for any church to use. True enough. But when and if these prayers appear in the Psalter Hymnal or the proposed service book, the membership of the church views them as quite official. Consistories ought to take a careful look at these prayers, and forward reactions to the Liturgical Committee.

A form for readmission into the church was also recommended for trial use for two years, and two variations of the new communion liturgy for use during Advent and Christmas were approved for trial use. It won't be long and the "Formulary" section of our Psalter Hymnal will be longer than the section of Psalms and Hymns.

Just prior to our noon lunch break, and again during the course of the afternoon, synod was favored with the introduction of foreign missionaries who were home on leave, with a number of chaplains who serve in special ministries, and with the recently declared candidates for the ministry. This is a delightful time at synod, and we received words of information, inspiration and challenge from a few of their representatives who addressed us. For the work that God is doing through them, and will continue to do, we truly give thanks. And for their dedication and service, so often unrecognized, we express our gratitude.

Further decisions of Friday's session included an expression of *deep concern* to be conveyed to the *Gereformeerde Kerken of the Netherlands* concerning their synod's recent position about *homosexuals*. Our Interchurch Relations Committee was charged to seek to clarify the GKN's position, and make recommendations to our synod next year as to *how this may affect our relationship with that church*.

Also, *approval* was given for the *division of Classis Grand Rapids East*, as per their request for division by means of an overture.

Saturday, June 14

Saturday morning a considerable amount of time was spent in seeking to clarify the decision of the Synod of 1979 to "instruct consistories to defer implementation of the 1978 decision" pertaining to *women in the office of deacon*. Some churches proceeded immediately to ordain women to the office of deacon after the decision of 1978, without waiting for the following Synod of 1979 to ratify the decision and make the necessary changes in the Church Order. Not only did the Synod of 1979 choose not to ratify the decision of 1978, but appointed another study committee, and then asked the churches "to *defer implementation of the 1978 decision*" (italics ours). The Synod of 1980, therefore, was confronted with two overtures, one appeal and two communications, all basically asking synod to interpret that decision.

After much discussion about what seemed to many of us as a rather clear matter, it was decided to interpret the decision of 1979 "to mean that those women already ordained as deacons prior to the decision of the Synod of 1979 be allowed to serve out their term, but that *no further election of women for*

ordination as deacons be permissible in any of the churches, *including those churches where such ordination has already taken place*" (italics ours). So in summary, no church is to elect or ordain women as deacons until further decision by synod. I sincerely doubt that the decision of 1979 was that difficult to interpret, but. . .

An overture from Classis Hudson asking synod to designate the Sunday prior to January 22nd (the anniversary of the U.S. Supreme Court decision re: abortion on demand) as Sanctity of Life Sunday to be observed annually by all our congregations, also requires a considerable amount of synod's time. The advisory committee's recommendation not to accede to this overture finally passed. Abortion is indeed a serious evil in our society, and we ought to be very concerned about opposing it with all our ability. But several years ago already, synod warned against the proliferation of "specially designated Lord's Days" which focus on one specific cause or institution. Indeed, let the Christian's voice be heard in pro-life groups, etc., but *let not synod be declaring a special Sunday* when all churches are required to focus on that issue.

Monday, June 16

The issue which provided the most significant debate Monday morning was that pertaining to *movie reviews* in *The Banner*. Two overtures were before synod to discontinue these reviews. Though the issue before the house was whether or not these reviews should appear in *The Banner* at all, the debate focused largely on the *kind of reviews* that have appeared, or perhaps more correctly stated, the distinctively Christian nature of these reviews. There was a strong voice expressed that the reviewers of these movies should remember that the people who are reading these reviews are thinking of them, not from the point of view of the educational value of the movie, but from the point of view of entertainment. Though the voice vote was by no means unanimous, the advisory committee's recommendation not to accede to these overtures passed.

Classis Muskegon sent an overture pertaining to the *delegation of deacons to major assemblies*, suggesting a specific plan in which a division of labor could be effected in both classis and synod. You could sense a strong sentiment in favor of such a decision, but the advisory committee recommended that synod withhold action in view of the present study committee appointed by the Synod of 1979 to "study and define the office of deacon in the light of Scripture, the Confessions, its historical development, especially within the Reformed-Presbyterian tradition, and the '1973 Guidelines for Understanding the Nature of Ecclesiastical Office and Ordination'" (Acts of Synod 1979, p. 122). Several attempts to amend the motion were either defeated or ruled out of order, and finally the matter was recommitted to the advisory committee.

Synod also voted to designate the *New International Version of the Bible (NIV)* as one of the versions *acceptable* for use in worship services. This recent translation, which also involved the efforts of several members of the Christian Reformed Church,

has been warmly received by many Christians in recent years as a very understandable and readable version. Already last year, three classes overtured synod to adopt the NIV as one of the acceptable versions for use in our pulpits. But that synod withheld action in view of the fact that the Bible Translation Committee was preparing to report its review of the NIV. That led to the recommendation before us this year, and we trust that the long years of efforts put into the production of this Bible translation will be richly blessed by God and of great benefit to all God's people.

The evening session on Monday was devoted to the hearing of fraternal delegates from eight different denominations. It is good to hear what is happening in various parts of the nation and the world from those who are in ecclesiastical fellowship with us. The ecumenical task is an important, howbeit, difficult one; we need to be much in prayer for guidance and direction as we continue to talk with and discuss our similarities and differences with those who profess to stand with us on the Word of God.

Tuesday, June 17

The entire morning session on Tuesday was devoted to a consideration of the Confessional-Revision *Gravamen of Dr. Harry Boer* relative to the subject of *reprobation*. The advisory committee requested that Dr. Boer be given an opportunity to address the synod, and that privilege was granted by voice vote. Dr. Boer indicated that his strong plea before us would be directed to urging us to *put off a decision* on this issue for at least one year to give the churches an opportunity to study the report of synod's committee. He ardently declared that synod would be radically changing the basis for the teaching of reprobation by adopting the recommendations of the study committee, and would be, in fact, acting in a hierarchical way.

There was considerable discussion of this issue, as expected, and there were a few speeches pleading for a delay of decision as Dr. Boer had requested. But we were also reminded, and rightly so, that we were being asked to adjudicate a gravamen, not adopting a study report. As the hour approached noontime, the vote was taken on recommendation number one, and it was passed with less than a dozen negative votes. The recommendation basically stated that "synod *do not accede to the request* made in Dr. Harry Boer's Confessional-Revision Gravamen."

A second recommendation, that "synod refer report 30 to the churches for elucidation of the teaching of the Canons on election and reprobation" was also passed, with the point being made that this report was not intended to be for further study or debate, but for "elucidation." Throughout the discussion, there was a good spirit, and we can be grateful that *our confession and its teaching re: election and reprobation* was so significantly upheld by the synod.

As some of our home missionaries were introduced during the afternoon session, we were reminded that Home Missions has entered its second century of service. In 1879, the first missionary was

sent out with a budget of \$500. Presently Home Missions operates with a five million dollar budget.

We also heard from Dr. Joel Nederhood on the work and challenge of the ministry of the Back-to-God Hour, an important ministry of our denomination which surely has been blessed by our Lord.

Synod defeated an overture asking Stated Clerks of Classes to send in calls which ministers accept to *The Banner*. And Mr. Harry Vander Meer was given a four-year appointment as Denominational Financial Coordinator, since Mr. Anthony Vroon is retiring.

The balance of the afternoon was spent discussing the report on the committee studying *the dance*. There seemed to be a marked frustration on the part of many of the delegates to know just how to handle this one. Some parts of the report were very acceptable, but in other areas, it seemed to go too far or say too much. Since the advisory committee's recommendation was to refer this report to the churches for study and evaluation, an early attempt to delete D. 1. (re: the liturgical dance) from the report was not allowed. There were also some strong appeals made to decide the issue now on the basis of principles rather than sending it out to the churches. But the advisory committee's recommendation carried by a fair majority, and the report will now be *referred to the churches for study* and evaluation for a period of two years, responses to be sent to the study committee by September 1, 1981. I would hope that consistories and/or individuals would respond to this report. There was evidence on the floor of synod an attitude that preferred not to enter further into the whole area of the dance with its lyrics of music, symbolism, ideologies and moral value. Perhaps we have been walking where angels fear to tread with this issue, and have begun to realize that it is rather impossible to legislate in this area which touches on Christian liberty. If, in the future, synod sees fit to adopt this report of the study committee, or one similar to it, we ought to be aware that the "okay" will have been put on the dance, and that, in fact, we will have a calling to "redeem" the dance. This delegate has yet to be convinced as to how we go about doing that with regard to the type of dance which initiated this study in the first place.

Wednesday, June 18

The entire session on Wednesday morning was devoted to matters pertaining to finances. One matter that aroused considerable discussion was the *Minister's Pension Fund*. Classis Alberta South had sent an overture requesting that there be a reappraisal of the present Minister's Pension Fund. The question really involves whether we should stay with the present concept of "advanced funding," or return to a type of "pay as you go plan." After recommitting the matter to the advisory committee, the essence of the overture was adopted, and a *study committee* was appointed to "perform an independent *evaluation* of the Minister's Pension Fund and report back the results to the Synod of 1981."

Finishing financial matters, including the adoption of 1981 quotas, occupied our time until coffee

break. Though there were some strong appeals to hold increases in check because of the economy of our day, the *quotas* adopted amounted to a 12.7% *increase*. Indeed, we all feel the economic squeeze of our day, but so do the agencies of the church. This increase basically permits our denominational agencies to carry on present programs with little or no expansion.

The overture from Classis Muskegon was again taken up, referred to earlier in this report, re: delegating *deacons to major assemblies*. The entire advisory committee agreed that this overture should be *referred to the study committee* presently reviewing the office of deacon appointed by the Synod of 1979, and expected to report next year. That recommendation carried. A minority of the advisory committee, however, wanted to go a step farther as Classis Muskegon had requested, and permit any classis desiring to do so, to delegate deacons to classis on a trial basis, using the plan suggested in Muskegon's overture. But when this motion was presented on the floor of synod, the chairman ruled it out of order on the grounds that it was in violation of the Church Order, Art. 40a. The chairman was challenged, but he was quite overwhelmingly sustained by a voice vote of the synod. Several delegates then asked for their negative votes to be recorded, because as one delegate put it, "I feel cheated," since there was no real opportunity to discuss the minority committee's recommendations. To this delegate, however, the chairman acted properly and according to the rules for synodical procedure. One more attempt to get the matter back on the floor for debate was made by a motion to reconsider the recommendation of the majority report, but that motion was also defeated. To change the Church Order is one thing, but this delegate received the distinct impression that this synod was *not of a mind to permit the churches to circumvent it*, nor to establish a pattern for *granting exceptions* to the Church Order for *experimentation*.

Observations

The Synod of 1980 completed its work by Wednesday afternoon at 6 o'clock, which may be a record, at least in recent years. There was something unique about this synod, a prevalent spirit which sometimes appeared lacking in previous synods. Our chairman, Rev. Eppinga, characterized that as a loving spirit. It is perhaps true that there were no major emotional issues before this synod, yet there were some significant matters. But a sharp division on matters characterized by heated debate was absent for the most part. There were differences of opinion to be sure, but only once did there appear on the floor of synod a majority and minority report from an advisory committee. This synod was also unique in that only one delegate present had ever served as an officer of synod before, and at least half of the delegates were present as "first time" delegates. What bearing that had, I do not know. But it was a pleasure to be at the Synod of 1980. It is my prayer that God will add His blessing to those decisions which please Him, and will bring to nought whatever was done against His will. Soli Deo Gloria!

VI. A COVENANTAL EDUCATION

Peter De Jong

Among the issues about which there is increasing confusion and division in our churches, one concerns education. In this case also let's try to see the situation more clearly by considering side-by-side (1) the historic, Biblical Reformed view and (2) the emerging, changing, broadening view held by an increasing number in our churches.

(1) The Biblical, Reformed View

The Lord's promised salvation is not only for individual believers. In promising and giving it He establishes a "covenant" relationship between Himself and believers and their children (Gen. 17:7; Acts 2:39; Gal. 3, esp. v. 29). We may not expect the promises and privileges of that covenant to be automatically realized. They demand that believing parents train their children in God's Word or Book of the Covenant ("Testament") in order to experience its blessings (Gen. 18:18, 19; Romans 2:25-3:2; Eph. 6:1-4). God commands us to earnestly and continuously train our children in the way of the Lord. The Lord showed us how important He considered this responsibility to be when He said, "Whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me" (Matt. 18:5), and added, "But whoso shall cause one of these little ones that believe in me to stumble, it is profitable for him that a great millstone should be hanged about his neck, and that he should be sunk in the depth of the sea." This Divine command forbids our turning the responsibility and control of our children's education over to the government or community and tolerating an education from which God and His Word are excluded. It requires us to insist on an education directed and disciplined by God's Word (Prov. 22:6; Ps. 119:105) to cover as far as possible every area of life (2 Tim. 3:13-17; 1 Cor. 10:30; Deut. 6:5-7). Such education is necessary both for the welfare of our own children and to equip us for genuinely Christian missionary and social influence in the world. ●

(2) The Broadening View

We must live in the light of God's revelation not only as given in the Bible but also as experienced by all mankind in its growing and improving understanding of man and his universe. The notion of a separate and different Christian school is largely a product of our narrow, ethnocentric immigrant mentality and history. It has impoverished our understanding of and sympathizes with others and has handicapped our missionary outreach and social influence. It has tied us to antiquated, authoritarian and traditionalistic methods of education and inhibited our children from the free development of their potentials and the happy, unrestrained lives to which we today are beginning to realize everyone has an inherent right. The Bible, a product of a certain era of history, must be interpreted and applied by us as we live in a quite different era of history. To regard its culturally conditioned traditions, laws and even scholastically misinterpreted "doctrines" as being unchanging and permanently valid is to radically misinterpret it and them. We must both for ourselves and our children and in order to make a Christian contribution to our age and society, learn to appreciate and show others that Christ was the Great Liberator from every kind of inhibition and constraint. If we are to have any Christian influence or missionary impact in our time and society we must address the present felt need for such liberation and teach our children, through really "progressive" and "open" schools, following the discoveries of "developmental psychology," to choose and find their own way in today's world. ●

NOTE:

It might be objected that one does not usually see what I have sketched out as "the broadening view" articulated as clearly as I have stated it. Loyalty to an institution that has become an established tradition in our communities tends to continue even after understanding and sharing the convictions that produced it are disappearing. As the costs of separate Christian schools increase (especially for large families as waning church community support throws most of the burden on parents), people begin to question whether they are worth the cost and effort required to maintain them. In communities in which

there have been no Christian schools some question whether they ought to be introduced. On the other hand, the demoralization of public schools is driving many who do not necessarily understand or share the convictions that produced our Christian schools, to look to them for practical reasons in order to get a more satisfactory education. Despite the confusion that there may be in many minds on this subject, Christian schools will be better promoted if we try to see and show clearly the real collision between the Biblical, Reformed, covenantal view which produced those schools and dictates their support and the broadening, secular view which in principle undercuts both their support and their education.

TRIBUTE TO D. MARTYN LLOYD-JONES

Peter De Jong

Introduction to Dr. Lloyd-Jones

In *The Calvin Forum* in February, 1943 Dr. Clarence Bouma, the editor, called attention to a little book, *The Plight of Man and the Power of God*. He hailed it as "a gem of 120 pages" which "ought to be on the desk of every preacher in the English-speaking world. And it ought to be read by many who are not preachers." "Here is the unadulterated, God-centered faith of the epistle to the Romans made simple, clear, living, real, 'down-to-date'. The sin of man and the wrath of God etched in sharp biblical lines, and all of it overarched by the Gospel of the grace of the same sovereign God—the power of God unto salvation." "Read, re-read, and digest this little book. You may 'discover' the epistle to the Romans, even if you have been a preacher for some years. Here is the Reformed Faith thrown against the dark background of the sin and devilry of man. How this gospel both exalts and humbles! Read this living re-interpretation of the eternal gospel from the pen of a Welsh Calvinist, preaching every Sunday in a British pulpit, and now published by an American publishing house."

My curiosity and interest aroused by that kind of praise, I ordered the book. Dr. Bouma's recommendation did not exaggerate. It was not a commentary on the Letter to the Romans, but only an introduction to its first chapter. Of the book's five chapters four diagnosed the "plight of man" (Dr. Lloyd-Jones was a physician before he became a preacher!), and only the last dealt with the remedy, "the power of God." That little book, just as Dr. Bouma had suggested, led me to turn to the Letter to the Romans with a new interest. The result was study and a series of about a dozen sermons during the last half of 1944, working through Paul's letter. When shortly thereafter I entered the U.S. Navy as a chaplain and had to work among the endlessly varied groups of sailors who represented the variety of people who make our melting-pot of nations, the study of the Book of Romans, the most extensive and systematic introduction to Christian doctrine given us in the

Bible, became the subject matter for several of the most interesting Bible classes I have ever been privileged to lead. As I look back over the years I see the little book of Lloyd-Jones, in the providence of God, having an incalculable amount of influence on my thinking, life and labor as a minister of the gospel.

In his simple and direct, unassuming style and excellent English, in his deep personal commitment to the unchanging, revealed Gospel of God, in his keen sense of the needs of man and of the temper and character of our times as he seeks to systematically present and apply the Gospel, Dr. Lloyd-Jones in his writings has taught me and a multitude of others a great deal about preaching the gospel. For a number of years I subscribed to his *Westminster Record* which each month circulated another of Dr. Lloyd-Jones' sermons in the series which he had been preaching. (Subsequently his sermons were published as series of books, earlier by Eerdmans, later by Zondervan and Baker.) I found them invigorating for personal faith and helpful in exposition and applying the Bible in preaching.

Christianity Today's Interview

In its February 8, 1980 issue *Christianity Today* directed the spotlight of the evangelical world at the career of this little Welsh preacher, now in his 80th year, with his portrait on its front cover and an introductory editorial entitled, "Martyn Lloyd Jones: For Whom Proclamation Was Paramount." It pointed out that his remarkable, unique, three-decade ministry in central London had been based on the conviction that preaching the gospel was "the highest and greatest and most glorious calling." Because of this conviction he opposed "choirs and songleaders, church processions and liturgical embellishments, public testimonies and responsive readings, pulpit entertainers and literary lecturers" as taking time or attention away from reading or preaching the Word of God. This was not self-exaltation for "he would not cross the road to hear himself preach, and

seldom referred to himself in sermons." He did not emphasize personal work or counseling, "holding that such activity goes up when preaching goes down," although he has done a great deal of such work in his career. While he has broad evangelical sympathies he firmly opposes any denominational unity with those who deny the deity of Christ and other cardinal doctrines. (In his little Inter-Varsity pamphlet, "The Basis of Christian Unity" he advocated preaching the gospel to liberals but not with them.)

The leading article in the *Christianity Today* issue was a report on an interview by Carl Henry entitled, "Martyn Lloyd-Jones: From Buckingham to Westminster." It traced his career from the time when at the age of 27 as a brilliant young doctor, he felt called to the ministry and without formal theological training became pastor of a small Presbyterian congregation in South Wales and began expository preaching (simply explaining and applying the Bible). During the next 11½ years in this mining and industrial district his church grew from 93 to 530 members and attendance at church services reached about 850. In 1938 he was invited to become the associate of G. Campbell Morgan at London's Westminster Chapel where he became the sole minister in 1943. The war which led people to flee from London and blew off half of the chapel roof drastically reduced the size of the once large congregation, but by war's end attendance had again grown to about 500. In 1951 attendance had increased so that at times 2,500 people crowded the auditorium. Dr. Lloyd-Jones preached 45-minute sermons Sunday mornings and hour-long expositions at night. Although he saw many conversions he did not favor organized mass-evangelism and was, he thought, the only minister of a major church in London who did not cooperate in the Billy Graham crusades. He felt that real revival must be the work of the Holy Spirit and was "unhappy about organized campaigns and even more about the invitation system of calling people forward." He objected too to "having liberals and Roman Catholics on the platform" in such crusades. He feared this trusting "in techniques rather than in the power of the Spirit." He also shied away from the charismatic Keswick conferences with their unscriptural views of sanctification. Genuine evangelicalism needs both an emphasis on the intellectual and on the heart. For him a "key verse" came to be Romans 6:17, "Ye have obeyed from the heart the form of sound words delivered unto you." (Actually in this quotation the "form of sound words" comes from 2 Tim. 1:13!) He saw the main problem in evangelical circles as "confusion"; "concessions have been made to so-called scholarship, and there has been a slide toward a liberal view of the Scriptures and of particular doctrines" as "prominent evangelicals . . . quietly and subtly crossed the line by concessions to higher criticism. At stake is the loss of a doctrine of the full inspiration and inerrance of Scripture." Compromised churches have "an identity crisis" when many "leaders and teachers of students disown basic Christian doctrines. For dedicated evangelicals to labor in such circles ultimately suggests that these truths do not matter." He believes

"evangelicals should combine forces—not to form a new denomination, but for fellowship and cooperation. Such mutual strengthening is the hopeful way into the future." Although he has a great sense of humor, he feels that in the pulpit "in the terrible position of standing between God and souls that may not go to hell" one is in a "position . . . too appalling for humor."

Asked about his views of Christian responsibility in the current economic situation, he replied that we must preach the message of "God's judgment on men and the world." Because man is a sinner, any human contrivance is doomed to fail; the only hope for the world is the return of Christ—nothing else." Although opposed to setting times, he saw the return of the Jews to Jerusalem as prophetically significant of the end time. Asked whether we should not "press the claims of Christ in all the arenas of society," Dr. Lloyd-Jones emphatically disagreed. "You can't reform the world. That's why I disagree entirely with the 'social and cultural mandate' teaching and its appeal to Genesis 1:28. It seems to me to forget completely the Fall." "The end time is going to be like the time of the Flood." "I believe the Christian people—but not the church—should get involved in politics and in social affairs. The kingdom task of the church is to save men from the wrath to come by bringing them to Christ." "The main function of politics, culture, and all these things is to restrain evil. They can never do an ultimately positive work." "You can never Christianize the world." When "all civilization is rocking and we are facing collapse, morally, politically and in every other way . . . our urgent message should be, 'Flee from the wrath to come.'" Although he encouraged his son-in-law to labor in the European Parliament, he was convinced that to say "this is the Christian political view" was "the mistake of Abraham Kuyper." Kuyper placed himself in a compromise position: a Christian minister becoming prime minister and then needing to form a coalition with Roman Catholics and claiming Christian sanction for specific political positions." In the current collapse of civilization our message should be "Flee from the wrath to come" and "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ."

An Evaluation

There is abundant reason for thanksgiving to God for the remarkable career of Dr. Lloyd-Jones and the enormous influence that he has had in Great Britain and throughout the world. His single-minded practice and promotion of expository preaching has had an incalculable influence on evangelical churches and ministers in our time and, as I have already indicated, I am sure that any gospel minister could profit greatly by studying his sermons.

As we as Bible-believing Reformed Christians seek to appreciate and profit by the massive work of Dr. Lloyd-Jones, can we see weaknesses in it which ought not to be imitated? I believe that there are several.

1. Even his expository method of preaching concentrating over a long period of time on one or two books (twelve volumes of sermons on Romans and

eight on Ephesians in print or being printed), powerful and helpful as it is, has an obverse side. Some years ago when I was reading month by month the *Westminster Record*, each containing one printed sermon, Dr. Lloyd-Jones began preaching on Ephesians 6:11, "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil." That month-by-month series on the "wiles of the devil" expanded until, as I recall, there were about 50 individual sermons in it! Even at that I'm sure that the preacher did not exhaust the number of tricks which the devil uses to oppose the Lord and His gospel, but the question can hardly help but arise whether the Christian and church are best built up by such a prolonged and heavy concentration on that important subject. We in our Reformed tradition have one practice and rule (though it is increasingly criticized and neglected) that is designed to save the church from being so largely at the mercy of a minister's hobbies. That is "catechism preaching." At a little conference some years ago one of the Reformed Baptists (the group that has been especially influenced by Dr. Lloyd-Jones work) was speaking. In the open discussion this matter of catechism preaching was brought up—and the speaker's reaction was that he could never put up with such a "straight-jacket." As a matter of fact it has been this "strait-jacket" that has often, I am sure, been far more helpful both to ministers and churches than many realize in holding before them the constant ideal of preaching and teaching "the whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:27). The famous British preacher and his many followers have lacked that kind of discipline and I believe their work, splendid as it is, might have been even richer if they had had it.

2. Looking at his work from our perspective, we are compelled also to recognize in its imbalance a lack of appreciation and emphasis on the Biblical teaching of God's covenant and its implications for the Christian home and family. Although Dr. Lloyd-Jones is a Presbyterian he has gained an especially large following among the Baptists many of whom are developing a real enthusiasm for Calvinistic doctrines. An article in the April 4, 1980 *Christianity Today* entitled, "Britons Wed Baptist Ecclesiology with Reformed Theology," calls attention to this development, highlighting especially the influence of Lloyd-Jones as a leader in it. We read that though he is a Congregationalist "the Doctor only baptized believers at Westminster Chapel and they by affusion," and he paved the way for the Chapel to call as his successor a Southern Baptist. It is not surprising that in this kind of atmosphere the reader will miss much appreciation of or emphasis on the Biblical "The promise is to you and to your children" (Acts 2:39), not as a substitute for personal faith, but as an incentive to seek it.

3. In the January 19, 1980 *Standard Bearer*, (periodical of the Protestant Reformed Churches) Prof. H. Hanko reviewed Dr. Lloyd-Jones' Commentary on Ephesians 1. While warmly appreciative of many of the virtues of this work he had to call attention to the faulty treatment of verses 4 and 5, its sketchiness in dealing with the doctrine of God's election and even refusal to make a choice between the ex-

planation that God chose us "in spite of ourselves" and the view that He chose only because "he has foreseen that we would exercise faith." To hedge at this point is hardly doing justice to the Bible's claims about the sovereignty of God who "worketh all things after the counsel of His will."

4. I cannot escape the conviction that in the Doctor's intense preoccupation with the evangelistic call to "believe in the Lord Jesus Christ" he does less than justice to the other ingredient in the "great commission"; the injunction to teach men to observe all things which the Lord commanded His converts (Mt. 28:20). The Apostle Paul indeed stressed "to all" "repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ," but that preaching as He did it included "the whole counsel of God" and everything that was "profitable" to Christians (Acts 20:20, 21, 27). See how the latter parts of his letters to the Ephesians and Colossians emphasize the social implications of the Gospel for the Christian's life in the world. We can understand and share the doctor's reaction to the liberal error of substituting the "social gospel" for the real gospel, and the tragic "derailment" of Abraham Kuyper's multifaceted program to recognize Christ as King in every area of life is becoming only too evident to almost everyone in our day; but the errors of others who have betrayed the gospel in their zeal for a secularized "Kingdom" which disobeys the Word of the King, should not mislead us, out of reaction to ignore the Lord's claims on every area of life.

One misses the Biblical injunction that every Christian's role in life is to be acknowledged as a God-given calling or "vocation" (1 Cor. 7:20-24), as "sacred" in its way as the pastor's call to the gospel ministry. "Let each man, wherein he was called, therein abide with God." It seems to me that these writings do considerably less than justice to this part of the Christian's responsibilities. I remember how startled I was when I first read in his superb treatment of the *Sermon on the Mount* (Vol. 1, pp. 155, 156) the suggestion that the Church beware of denouncing communism because that would inhibit it in its opportunity to witness to the communist—as though God's commandments "Thou shalt not steal" and "Thou shalt not covet" had nothing to say regarding the rightness or wrongness of communist economic doctrine! I agree that the church should not be diverted into making its preaching an "anti-communist crusade," and that the Christian's duty as a citizen is something quite different from the Churches' official involvement in political organizations, but it seems that the Doctor's vision at this point is not as clear as it is at many others and is failing to adequately recognize the light which the gospel sheds on our duties in the world.

What is the conclusion? Let's rejoice in and make abundant use of the works of Dr. Lloyd-Jones who is undoubtedly one of the greatest gospel preachers in our time. But let's also be alert to some of the weaknesses in his massive work. The Lord has given us an infallible Bible; but he has not given us any infallible preachers. Like the Bereans we all need to "search the scriptures" and learn from His servants who help us do that. ●

THE DOCTRINE OF SALVATION

Lubbertus Oostendorp

SALVATION, WHAT IS IT?

The teachings of the Christian faith are often studied under the six divisions of, the doctrines of (1) God, (2) Man, (3) Christ, (4) Salvation, (5) the Church, and (6) the Future. In this article Dr. Lubbertus Oostendorp, who recently retired after spending the last 15 years of his service as a minister teaching Christian Doctrine at the Reformed Bible College, introduces a series of studies on the fourth division, the Doctrine of Salvation.

"What must I do to be saved," the Philippian jailor cried, and Paul didn't even ask whether he understood what "saved" meant. Perhaps we may assume a kind of universally felt need or sense of misery which automatically gives meaning to the desire for salvation. Would not everybody then be seeking redemption? Or could it be that the knowledge is latent and awaits only an existential jolt? Let the foundations be shaken and the sinner will cry out! Professor Berkhof told us about a careless unbeliever who fell and was badly hurt. Would he now change and be saved? "But, you see, it takes more than a bump on the head to be saved," the professor concluded.

Evangelicals used to speak of "coming under conviction." It was this which gave experiential knowledge and personal meaning to salvation. Coupled with this subjective side there was a fairly uniform objective description among orthodox protestants as to what this salvation involved. Is this still true today?

Present Confusion

Why has "born again" replaced "saved" in describing a Christian? What has happened to the knowledge of sin and the need for true saving faith? Has there been a shift in the concept of salvation? Theological confusion and doctrinal indifference conspire together to blur the older concepts. "Orthodox" has been replaced by "conservative" and this in turn has yielded to an even more nebulous "evan-

gelical." Theologically we may well ask, "What ever happened to soteriology?"

Practical considerations shape the contemporary concepts of salvation. The Jews, including the apostles, were looking for an earthly kingdom. Jesus, therefore, was supposed to fit into their program. And so every age and circumstance has first built the cart and tried to fit the horse before it. The deliverer may thus be seen in a variety of roles—conqueror of the evil spirits, healer, national liberator, social reformer, friend, or forgiver.

The temptation to seek the convenient Christ of our bidding is not new. Kittel observes that the early church preferred the name Kurios (Lord) to Soter (Savior) because the latter was open to both Jewish and imperial perversions. Things are much worse today. The Gospel has been philosophized, psychologized, sociologized, and politicalized.

Philosophizing Salvation

Sometimes this secularization has been done openly, as by Bultmann and his crowd. Kuitert speaks frankly of abandoning the old concepts and replacing them by new ones. The conscious reconstruction is then done in the name of modern philosophy and is supported by a new interpretation of the Bible. The historic doctrines and old realities of sin and hell, personal devil and divine judgment are thus lost in the realms of myth. But out of our modern understanding of man and a new view of the Bible there come all kinds of ideas of salvation.

Rudolph Bultmann has developed the most influential, profound and fascinating combination of demythologizing hermeneutics, existential philosophy and psychological soteriology. Surprisingly he credits Karl Barth, with whom he differed radically, with furnishing him with his most effective tool, namely, the existential or function concept of the truth. His most profound and perhaps most dangerous concept is his identifying Paul's teaching about the old and new self with a modern existential experience. Salvation is then pictured as the bringing into existence of the authentic self (existentially understood). Most remarkably for him, this can be achieved only and solely by the preaching of the Gospel (de-mythologized). Pure existentialists have been few in

the U.S. but more abundant amongst German theologians. His influence lingers, even though he has been superseded by liberation theology.

Psychologizing Salvation

In America the psychology of religion has entered many a pulpit in simpler forms. We have our powers of positive and possibility thinking, pandering to the longing for success. Karl Menenger, himself a psychologist, complains that "sin" has been obscured by sickness or crime. Guilt has become "guilt feeling" and you're OK and I'm OK. One of the more comprehensive efforts to psychologize salvation may be found in a book by Bovet, a Swiss psychologist, with the intriguing title *The Road to Salvation*. It claims to show us how to overcome "the powers" and become a "whole person."

We need not disparage the psychological importance of salvation while we point out that the reduction of salvation to something basically, if not exclusively, psychological is a perversion of the Gospel.

Socializing Salvation

The social gospel has an even older history than the psychological gospel. Its modern and resurrected form is called liberation theology. As advocated by Jurgen Moltmann, the father of the theology of hope, it repudiates the importance of any stress on personal salvation. Even Bultmann comes in for severe criticism because of his neglect of the social and political aspects of religion. In fact, Moltmann's disciples also criticized him for putting the hope too far in the future and making it too much the work of God. This indeed made him take a more activist stand in which he approves both Marxist revolution and socialistic gradualism. He anticipates a better world by the cooperation of the gradualism of the West and the revolution of the East.

Like Bultmann, he and some other liberation theologians have succeeded fairly well in giving a comprehensively re-worked soteriology to fit their program. Although he presents a theology of hope without a personal immortality, he has many followers. In fact, liberation theology dominates the World Council of Churches, was accepted at the World Mission Council at Bangkok, and has swept the Third World.

Karl Barth

Karl Barth has also influenced modern concepts of soteriology both positively and negatively. He called men back to the great themes of the Reformation. The essence of salvation is to be found in reconciliation with God through Jesus Christ. Thus he protests vigorously against any horizontal, this-worldly secular concept of salvation. The gospel of salvation is the message of the grace of God in Jesus Christ. In his own peculiar way, he develops the universally effective reconciliation of all men. Christ has removed all the wrath of God. In fact, His wrath was His love. Thus dialectically man may be both elected and rejected, but the YEA will overwhelm any of God's nays.

Barth claimed to reject universalism. However, he goes to great length to show that even Judas was saved. We know no man who was lost, no man outside of Jesus Christ. We may hope that hell will be empty. Nor do we really bring about a reconciliation of the sinner with God. The reconciliation is already there. Hence the gospel is telling people that they are already reconciled whether they believe or not. Although Barth himself was enthusiastic about telling all men that they were already saved, his followers suffered from the logic of this position. They began to lose the urgency of preaching the gospel.

Influenced by concepts of universal reconciliation, some Barthians drifted into formulating the creed of reconciliation (Presbyterian, 1967). Here the logic of reconciliation went beyond Barth in seeking dialogue with, rather than conversion of other religions. The you're OK, God has accepted you as you are, you only need to know God loves you, and all you must do is to be reconciled with everybody; these and similar ideas controlled the idea of soteriology.

Politicizing Salvation

But what a shock was in store for the reconcilers! With a bang liberation theology burst upon the scene. It declared no peace but war upon the oppressors, The Exodus became the great myth, the Christ with the whip in the temple, the redeemer. Everywhere one hears that God is the God of the poor and the oppressed.

In evaluating the emphasis on liberation, especially of the socially and politically oppressed, we might remind ourselves that our fathers once sang "O Lord make us free" (Psalter Hymnal No. 312). And no doubt they meant from the Spanish tyranny! We praise the religious zeal for liberty of another day, while showing indifference to contemporary injustice. The Christian must be concerned and involved. We shall be involved, but not confused. And confusion reigns in liberation theology.

Back to the Bible

The contemporary secularized ideals of much modern soteriology can best be met by a renewed study of the Bible. There is a new hermeneutics which is fatal to the true doctrine of salvation. Men like Herman Ridderbos in his *The Coming of the Kingdom* have continued the kind of service once given by Gerhardus Vos. This is what we need—a sound Biblical theology. In the U.S. Biblical studies are, moreover, complicated by the prevalence of dispensationalism. Are there two salvations? One for the Jews and another for the Church? In fact, the way we apply Scripture to the present or the future will influence our soteriology.

What does "salvation" mean? There are many popular ways of expressing an answer. We speak about going to heaven or not going to hell. Others emphasize having one's sins forgiven or having eternal life. Perhaps in the language of the current fad, being "born again" is another way of saying being saved.

Many a preacher, no doubt, is most earnestly urging his auditors to be saved without telling them what it means. Mostly it seems to be something easily had with little or no knowledge or effort. In fact, it might not be as popular if its nature were better known.

In Doctrine and Creeds

Dogmatics calls the doctrine about salvation soteriology. In consulting Berkhof's *Systematic Theology* one finds many definitions but not one comprehensive one on what salvation is. Rather, we have to go back to Christology to find "the salvation in Christ" which becomes ours in the process of personal appropriation. To get the whole picture we would have to put together what is said about justification and sanctification and also take a glance at glorification. By this time we have become aware of a very real problem in studying doctrine by six loci or areas. I have not discovered a better way, but I sometimes have some difficulty putting the parts together. After all, the Christian concepts of salvation may truly be so deep and broad that no simple definition can do justice to it.

The Heidelberg Catechism gives a clear picture of what it means to be saved. One might almost be satisfied with the first answer. But soon we realize that there are some areas not covered in this most amazing summary of a Christian's comfort.

The Canons of Dort contain the most elaborate statement about God's great saving work. The real concern here was not some philosophical position, but an accurate Scriptural description of how God's people are saved. The question was: Who saves and how? But here too the answer is neither simple nor concise.

Scripture contains many beautiful texts that come close to defining salvation. Here, too, much searching and study may be required: Ridderbos in his *The Coming of the Kingdom* has made an excellent analysis of Christ's teaching about salvation (pp. 211-284). Another great NT scholar warns us that it is not always easy to determine just what the Gospel means by "to save." Writing about the Saviour in the *Self Disclosure of Jesus* Vos says: "It is not, however so easy as it might seem to determine the sense connected by Jesus and the evangelists with the term 'to save.' 'Saving' is one of those conceptions which by its very commonness of usage have suffered attrition of meaning and have lost the sharp contours of their original import. The average sense connected with the term in the present day religious mind is the very general one of deliverance, without any very real reflection upon either the 'where from' or the 'where to'. On the whole, the negative sense predominates in a more or less hazy apprehension" (p. 256).

Perhaps a consideration of Vos' and Ridderbos' study can help us penetrate this haze of generality!

WORLD EVENTS IN THE LIGHT OF SCRIPTURE

Herman Woltjer

Although the Scriptures teach us to discern the signs of the times, few things receive so little attention as the Reformed view of the events pertaining to the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is a fact that many Christians are accustomed to running in the narrow path of their individual salvation and no doubt, this is important; nevertheless, it is only part of the truth.

The Biblical truth is that all the world which fell into the power of sin will again be restored and raised to a far higher glory. That is why there must necessarily be continual war between God and Satan. Unless we accept this cosmological view of salvation, we shall never be able to understand the Scriptures, least of all the book of Revelation.

The child of God who observes world events, stands in awe of the way in which Scriptures are being fulfilled. To him there are many phenomena of our times reminding him that the end of all things is at hand, and that the signs of the coming of the Lord, the precursory signs, are multiplying as we approach that end. We don't know when this will happen, not only because God's measure of time differs from ours, but also because tremendous things must

come to pass before the end shall be. The whole church must be gathered; the fulness of the Gentiles and of the Jews; the measure of iniquity must be filled; Antichrist must reach his culmination; Gog and Magog must play their own part in the things that must come to pass. In our own day especially, we see all these things occurring with astounding rapidity.

In order to receive a better understanding of these events, we must pay attention to the fact that from early history on, God has drawn a dividing line between the nations of this earth. I am referring to the significance of the river, Euphrates. This river is mentioned in the Bible several times, sometimes by name, and sometimes as just "the river." We read in Ps. 72:8 "He shall have dominion from sea to sea and from the river (that is, Euphrates), unto the ends of the earth."

Already at the dawn of history, the Euphrates was mentioned (Gen. 2). We also read in Gen. 15:18 that the Lord said to Abraham, "Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates. We know that this promise was realized during the reign of king David (2 Sam. 8:3).

So we find that the Euphrates river was the eastern boundary line between the outward kingdom of

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God-Israel and the kingdom of darkness—the Gentiles; but we also know from the book of Revelation, chapters 9 and 16, that in the new dispensation the Euphrates River is still a symbol of the boundary line between the so-called Christian nations of the west, and the heathen nations. Of course, there are Christians the world over, but there is a distinct difference.

When Israel as a nation almost 2,000 years ago rejected the Christ, the promise of the gospel became worldwide. However, the white horse and his rider of Rev. 6 has for many centuries pursued a definite main course well in the westward direction into Europe (Acts 16:13). In due time also to the North American continent. Outwardly these nations have been Christianized.

Maybe the question arises, why westward? In order that the word of the Lord be fulfilled spoken by His servant Noah in Gen. 9:27 "The Lord shall enlarge Japheth, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant." We know that after the flood the descendants of Japheth journeyed mainly in the western direction toward Europe. These nominal Christian nations of the west have dominated the entire world for many centuries. The western nations have been the center of civilization and for them the law went forth over many nations, tribes and multitudes.

During the course of history, European explorers discovered the vast areas of this earth. From the western world the gospel was brought, first by missionaries, and today by radio and TV as well, to the utmost parts of the earth. This is in fulfillment of the word of the Lord spoken by His servant in Isaiah 66:19, that the descendants of Japheth shall declare the glory of the Lord among the Gentiles.

The world picture, however, is beginning to change. It was in the year 1914 on the eve of WW I that the British Secretary of State with an almost prophetic view, gave the epitaph for an entire era when he said, "The lights are going out in the Western world and I doubt if we will see them lighted again." At about the same time, the German philosopher, Oswald Spengler wrote his well known book, "Der Untergang des Abendlandes," (The Decline of the West). Since then, tremendous changes have taken place, not only in the Church world, but also in the political, economic, and social world. Nothing has been the same since and those who reflect on this are stunned by what has happened in the last decades of history.

We read in the book of Revelation that Babylon, the nominal Christian nations of the west which are rapidly becoming anti-Christian, shall come to her final destruction. The Lord shall execute his vengeance upon Babylon. It was in these countries that the Lord planted his Church, but in general, like Old Testament Israel, they are rejecting the Christ.

Today we see a certain spiritual vitality ebbing out of the western world. The stamina isn't there anymore, it seems. There is a growing emptiness in the western soul, a moral vacuum. Today there is much insecurity and unrest in the western world. Inwardly we are plagued by inflation, the economy is upset, there is disregard for authority, etc., etc. Out-

wardly there is the growing threat of the U.S.S.R. building a war machine the likes of which the world has never seen.

The time is coming when the river Euphrates in the New Testament dispensation, the symbol of the boundary line between the once Christian and heathen nations, shall no more serve its purpose (Rev. 16:12). Today the western nations already feel the impact made by the policy of the oil kings of the East, for "the nations on the four corners of the earth" Gog and Magog are awakening. I refer to the millions of people of Asia and Africa, nations which have never played an appreciable part in history, but today are clamoring for their own place in the midst of the nations of the world. They are becoming conscious of their tremendous manpower; Scripture even says, "the number of whom is as the sand of the seashore" (Rev. 20:8).

I refer also to the United Nations where the "Christian" nations are outvoted by the heathen nations. I refer to a nation such as China, this immense country with more than 20% of the world population which has lived in seclusion for many centuries, but today is rapidly becoming a world power to be reckoned with.

The shape of the future is already evident. The world supremacy of the western nations is declining rapidly. People who reflect on this seriously are concerned about the future of the western nations.

Sometime ago, a well known magazine stated "It seems that a wave of pessimism is sweeping over the western world." If this is true, Rev. 9 speaks of it.

How altogether different, however, is the world and life view of the Christian! He knows it is written that all these things must come to pass.

Mankind has lived on this planet earth for about 6,000 years, but in the last decades the western world has reached a standard of living unknown in history. Indeed, Scripture tells us that from a human point of view the antichristian time will be a glorious time for the flesh (Rev. 18). Life on earth looks good even for many in the Church world. Although the Scriptures tell us that life is a battlefield for the Christian, for many this earth is more like a playground, and they fail to see that we are living in a sick society, for they are spiritually blind because "God shall send them strong delusion that they should believe a lie" (2 Thess. 2:11).

As history will come to a close, false prophecy in the church and violence in the world increases. The Christian while he continues his earthly pilgrimage, looks beyond the treacherous waves of life's stormy sea, waiting for the dawning of that great day, the glorious return of his Savior Jesus Christ. He will not return as the "man of sorrows" stumbling on the "Via Dolorosa" towards Golgotha as He did some 2,000 years ago. He will return as the Triumphant, riding on the white horse of victory, His eyes as a flame of fire, on His vesture a name written, "King of Kings and Lord of Lords" to destroy all His enemies, all who are not looking for that blessed hope; the glorious appearance of their Savior, Jesus Christ (Rev. 19:20). Terrible will He be in His dignity, He before whom earth and heavens tremble.

THESSALONIAN LESSONS

Henry Vander Kam

PAUL'S THANKSGIVING FOR THE THESSALONIAN CHURCH

Rev. Henry Vander Kam, pastor of the CR Church at Doon, Iowa, begins a series of studies on the letters to the Thessalonians, letters which focus attention especially on the Return of Christ.

Lesson 1 — I Thessalonians 1

On his second missionary journey the Apostle Paul had also come to the city of Thessalonica. This was one of the most important cities of that part of the world and had become the capital city of the whole province of Macedonia. Paul usually went to the larger population centers to bring the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Because of circumstances, the Apostle did not remain in Thessalonica very long. He preached in the synagogue of the Jews three Sabbath days (Acts 17:2). At the end of these three weeks the opposition to the gospel became so strong that the Apostle and those with him had to leave the city hastily. However, in the short time he had worked here a surprisingly large number of people had been converted. Some of the Jews believed, a great multitude of Greeks turned to the Lord, and not a few of the chief women obeyed the gospel. It is indeed amazing that so much was accomplished in so short a time. The gospel is powerful! The opponents of the gospel realized this and paid the Apostles the compliment of charging that they were turning the world upside down! That's what the gospel does! They, however,

did not mean it as a compliment but tried to stop the spread of this gospel. They even pursued the Apostles to the next city because they did not want their former way of life disturbed.

Most of those who believed in Thessalonica were Greeks, and this must be borne in mind in the understanding of these epistles. Neither the first nor the second letter Paul addressed to these people is characterized by a great deal of doctrinal discussion. Both letters are brief. The most important matter the Apostle deals with is the fact and manner of the second coming of Christ. In this connection he emphasizes the hope which is given to believers.

The Greeting

Paul follows the custom of his day in greeting those to whom he is writing, except that his greeting to the Thessalonians is shorter than that in any of his other epistles. He mentions himself and his two helpers, Silas and Timothy, and then simply says "unto the church of the Thessalonians." The word used for church was used in the Greek world of all manner of assemblies. This, however, is the assembly of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ. The letters to the Thessalonians were among the very first of the Apostle's writings. Here he does not yet go into a long and definitive salutation but he makes it very clear whom he has in mind while he is writing. To this church he speaks grace and peace. Although these terms were commonly used in letter writing, he pours a far richer content into both terms.

Paul's Prayer

The writer is very much aware of the tremendous progress which the Christians at Thessalonica had made in a very short time. For this he is most grateful because he sees here an evidence of the Spirit's work. As a result, he says that he gives daily thanks to God for them. His work is difficult, but the blessings it brings are also beyond description. Not only has he preached the word to them, he continues to be their pastor even though he is removed from them. He still remembers them in his prayers every day. Of Jesus we read various times that He spent an entire night in prayer, but, although Paul urges the various churches to prayer again and again, we do not often read of his own prayers. However, let no one think that this man could have such results upon his preaching if he was not at the same time a man of earnest and frequent prayer. He may have gone on to another field of labor, but the need of every church weighs heavily upon him.

For what does he give thanks? It is for the way in which the gospel has completely captured them! He remembers their work of faith. He has seen the fruits of faith in these Thessalonian Christians. And: By their fruits ye shall know them. Not only do they speak of faith; their works show it. He also remembers them for their labor of love. Their works were performed as they were driven by love! It is not only true that their works were different from their former manner of life, they also had a new motivation. This, of course, makes the work of faith possible. He also remembers their "patience of hope." By this term he means their endurance which is inspired by the hope they have in Jesus Christ, before our God and Father. These people have already suffered a great deal for the sake of the gospel; but it is made possible by the hope they have in the Christ and in His return. It is indeed amazing that these believers have progressed so far so quickly. Their faith, love and hope is clearly present and they have believed only a few months!

God's Elect

Paul is so thankful for the genuine evidence of their faith because he knows they are the elect of God. Therefore they are his brethren in the fullest sense of the word. He doesn't even tell them what he means by election because he has no doubt instructed them in this doctrine during the short time he has been with them. Think of it—converts from heathendom being instructed in such things from the very beginning! Of course, he could not preach the gospel without teaching election! This belongs to the heart of the gospel. He has made it very clear in some of his later writings what he means by the election of God (Ephesians and Romans). God has chosen them and it has not been their work. No one would ever choose for Him if He had not first chosen them. No one has ever "decided to follow Jesus." A denial of election is at the same time a denial of man's total depravity. It must also be observed that the Apostle "knows" they are elect. He shows that clearly in verse five. The gospel did not only come to them in word; it came with power! It was the power of God, or the power of the Holy spirit. It did not

come as a teaching as of the philosophers of the day—it went right to the heart and changed lives. This is the evidence that they are the elect of God. Others will only hear the word with the ear, as the opponents of the gospel in Thessalonica did. They were infuriated by it. "The beloved of God" find salvation in it. Their faith and love and hope is clear evidence that they are the chosen of God. That election ought to fill their hearts with joy. They have received the assurance of faith from it. There is no assurance without election.

Paul is not at all afraid of using himself as an example time and again. Here he calls to the remembrance of these Thessalonian Christians how he and his helpers had conducted themselves while they ministered to them. It should be clear to these people that the gospel which they brought had also done its work in their own lives. Why would anyone, with the talents and potentialities of Paul, have jeopardized his life if he were not completely captive to the Christ Whom he preached and were not filled with a consuming love for the people He had chosen?

Imitators of Paul and the Lord

These Christians had become imitators of Paul and his associates and of the Lord Himself. First they had to imitate the Apostle. He often speaks of this. He has not only preached the gospel but his whole life is a witness to that gospel. The life must agree with the teaching, or the one slays the other. Only then can they become imitators of the Lord as Paul had himself also become. This imitating refers especially to the manner in which they have borne affliction. Paul and Silas had come to Thessalonica from Philippi where they had been treated shamefully and had suffered a great deal. But, this abuse was not a reason to cease from preaching the word of God! Upon their coming now to Thessalonica, the same situation repeated itself, and they would, no doubt, have suffered many cruelties if they had not escaped the city. The believers in Thessalonica now had to bear the reproach of the enemies of the gospel. They received the word in much affliction. There must be much more to the gospel than their foes thought. They not only received that word in much affliction, but with joy of the Holy Spirit! They have indeed become imitators of both the Apostle and his Lord and have found that the joy of the Holy Spirit is much greater than the physical affliction they had to bear. Only those who are the elect of God will receive the word under such conditions. But, for them being His elect, there is no other way. Paul had experienced this himself. Christ had gone through unspeakable suffering for the word and for His people. They have become imitators of both Paul and Christ.

A Missionary Church

Now that they have learned to imitate both Paul and Christ, they have become an example to believers in Macedonia and Achaia. They have therefore become a pattern for others so that they too may become imitators. Their strategic place in this

important city causes the Apostle to rejoice in the quality of their faith. It is a living faith which is of great value to themselves and now also spreads from them to other believers. For you have become a sounding board for the gospel. Note that a sounding board does not itself *produce* the sound, but it amplifies the sound it has received. From you hath sounded forth "the word of the Lord"! Not your own experience! Only the word of the Lord initiates faith. Human experience may be interesting, but is not unto salvation! He now tells them that they have sounded God's word forth not only to Macedonia and Achaia, but it has gone forth everywhere! A church, recently come out of heathendom, is a missionary church such as has seldom been seen.

As a result of their faithful activity the work of the Apostle has been eased. So often he speaks to the one church concerning the progress of the other, but he doesn't have to speak about the church in Thessalonica at all because everyone has heard about it. The Thessalonian Christians speak to everyone of their faith but also of the Apostle's labors among them. If every church had shown this zeal how it would have helped Paul in his difficult labors. They speak to everyone how they had turned away from the idols of the day. There could be no compromise, of course. Idolatry and the service of Christ were mutually exclusive. But, this turnaround was a major step for these people to take. In their idol worship they had found their social life. Economically they would suffer if they turned their backs on idolatry. But, they did it! They turned to the true God. They turned from dead gods to a living God! Even if they have to suffer in the body as a result, it is well worth it. It has been a complete turnaround for them. But, that's what the gospel is all about. No wonder that their opponents claimed that the missionaries were turning the world upside down!

Waiting for the Returning Lord

These who are serving a true and living God have come to this position through the Son of God Who had been proclaimed to them. This Christ has gone above and is no longer present here in the church in physical form. The true believers now wait for that Son to come again. This coming again will be treated much more fully later in this epistle and in the next.

However, even though they may have had wrong ideas concerning the time and manner of that return, it is obvious here that they indeed believe in His return. Not only do they believe in this fact, they are longingly waiting for it. Theirs is not a "gospel" which only looks back over those things which have been completed, but it also looks forward to the return of Christ when all of the promised things shall be fulfilled. In a measure, these people are ready for that return. The Apostle reminds them that the One who will return is the same Jesus Who was raised from the dead. This may never be lost from sight.

Love and Judgment

This Jesus is also the One who delivers us from the wrath to come. Note the balance we find in this chapter. He has been speaking of the grace and peace of God; the love, the faith, the hope, and the joy of believers; but he also speaks of the wrath to come. In many places today the love of God alone is mentioned. Paul emphasizes the urgency of salvation and is fully aware of the fact that the wrath of God is something to be feared! He will not condone sin—and His wrath is kindled against it. He does not accept the blasphemer—and His wrath is kindled against such. But—and this is the glory of the gospel—He delivers us from the wrath to come! We are saved to fullness of life and from the wrath to come.

Questions for Discussion

1. Must the gospel be made "very simple" to those who hear it for the first time? How did Paul preach?
2. What is the place of prayer in the work of the Apostle? Does a minister's prayer life become evident in his work?
3. How can one be sure of his election? Pauline theology is based on election. Do we hear enough of this doctrine today?
4. Would it be proper for a minister to tell the congregation to become imitators of him? Discuss.
5. What does the New Testament mean by "witnessing"? Does the present-day form of "witnessing" agree with this?
6. Is the "wrath of God" a very important subject in the Scriptures? How is it related to the love of God, or isn't it so related?

PAUL'S DEFENSE OF HIS MINISTRY AT THESSALONICA

Lesson 2 — I Thessalonians 2:1-12

False Accusations

Those who had made it impossible for the Apostle to continue his ministry in Thessalonica have made all kinds of accusations against him and these he refutes in this particular section. Their attacks were not aimed at the message, first of all, but rather against the messenger. However, the criticism of him as a minister of the gospel could also lead to a

criticism of the message itself. For that reason he makes his defense. We do not know to what extent the Christians at this place had been influenced by these criticisms, but he seeks to cut off the effect immediately. The minister and the gospel he brings are too closely associated to allow such criticism to stand. Besides, he knows himself to be blameless of the charges made against him.

There were certain conditions at that time which made some of the accusations of his opponents more

plausible than we might think in our time. In the first place, no one had asked the Apostle to come to Thessalonica. He was not "called" there. Then why did he come? There has, perhaps, never been a time in which there were so many philosophers and teachers (quacks!) roaming the countryside as during the time the Apostles lived. There were various reasons for this. These "teachers" went about to make a living by means of their teaching. They served themselves and not those whom they taught. The teachings which were coupled with some religion were often the most popular. Now, in view of these conditions, it was rather simple to attack Paul and claim that he was of the same kind as the others. If this charge were believed then he would indeed be discredited, but the gospel would also be undermined. His purpose in this section of this epistle is not first of all to defend himself, but his love for the gospel compels him to write as he does.

Sincere Preaching of God's Truth

"Our entering in unto you . . . hath not been found vain." This the Thessalonians know. Let them remember it. When he and his associates came to them and while he worked among them, it was not true that they were empty-handed. In other words, they did not come to them in order to receive from the people, but to give them something! They did just the opposite of the frauds to whom they are likened. This reminder alone should be sufficient to dispel the notion that they were like the others. Paul will make it clear in subsequent words what he gave them.

No, they had not arrived at Thessalonica to receive something for their own benefit. The opposite is true. They had come to this city from Philippi. Here they had been treated shamefully. They had been beaten; they had been placed in prison without a hearing; they had even been placed in stocks (Acts 16). It is true that they had also had a marvelous experience there. God had opened the prison for them and they had been able to minister to the jailor. But, if there would be any experience which would turn them away from the gospel ministry, this was it! However, they had not become discouraged. They had simply traveled 100 miles(!) to come to Thessalonica! They had received courage to do this from their God. No one else could have persuaded them. They had received the courage to speak the same gospel for which they were imprisoned at Philippi to people at Thessalonica. This is their only calling! They brought the gospel "in much conflict," i.e., they agonized over it. They sought the welfare of the people to whom they brought the word. This attitude is the direct opposite of the charge of their accusers.

How did they bring the word here? The author first speaks negatively whereby he informs us of the charges which were brought against him. Our exhortation, or appeal, was not of error or delusion. They had indeed made a strong appeal to the people. Paul never brought the gospel in a manner of "take it or leave it." He pleaded with the people to believe! But, this was not an appeal to a delusion as though it had no substance! He knew whereof he spoke—he be-

lieved it with all his heart, and he wanted all his hearers to have what he has. Neither were his motives impure. This refers to the next charge which they levelled against him. By impure motives they may have referred to several things. Not a few of the chief women had believed and this was sufficient for his accusers to charge immorality. His own gain and honor were also called suspicious. They had also charged him with guile, or with deceit. Many of the teachers of the day used all manner of tricks. Paul is charged with using gimmicks. These charges, if true, would make him totally unworthy to be followed. He says the charges are false and will prove it in the next verses.

Approved by God and Seeking His Approval

He now tells us why the charges brought against him are lies. He and those who were with him have been approved by God Himself. They have been approved to bring the gospel and that gospel is the truth and cannot be characterized as error. God would not entrust that gospel, which is the gospel of His Son, to everyone. This ought to make clear the fact that lies have been spoken concerning Paul and his companions. Besides, if they are approved of God, men surely ought to approve of them. But, they were not only accused of speaking error, their motives were also questioned. They speak the gospel at all times not to please men but to please the God who has given that gospel to them. Now God is the One who judges the heart, something which men cannot do. Men can therefore not sit in judgment on their motives.

They did not use words of flattery while they were ministering to the church at Thessalonica. Words of flattery are used by those who seek to entrap people into something which they might not desire. They are used to make an appeal to men where by the emphasis is shifted from the message which is brought. Paul and his helpers have not used this method, as the Thessalonians well know. All the emphasis rested on the word which they brought. The word has to draw men; other methods will always fail. They are seeking to please God, not men, and therefore the whole idea that they would use flattery is ridiculous. Neither did they use methods as a cloak of covetousness. Flattering words were often used to cover up the real reason teachers had come, namely, to enrich themselves. Perhaps the people would not be able to judge whether or not this defense of the Apostle is true because it deals with the motivation of the ministers. Therefore Paul calls God to witness. He proves the hearts and the Apostle is so sure of the nobility of his motives that he is not afraid to call God to witness.

They have not sought their own glory or honor from this church nor any other. What human honor was there to be had? Is the suffering, such as at Philippi, or the necessity of the hasty retreat from Thessalonica to bring honor to men? How can anyone seriously accuse them of this? Yet, in a certain sense—although that never entered the mind of their accusers—they could have claimed respect and honor from those to whom they ministered. They had been appointed Apostles by the Lord.

They were His ambassadors! They came with His authority! Let no one think lightly of the high office to which they had been appointed!

In Motherly Care

Instead of emphasizing the authority wherewith they came and the honor due to them as those who had been divinely appointed to high office, they did the very opposite. We were "gentle" in the midst of you. No one can rightly claim that they had sought honor for themselves. They have dealt with the people of Thessalonica as a mother would deal with her own little children. A mother feeds, clothes, nurses, defends, yes, sacrifices herself for her own children. That is the way the Apostles had conducted themselves while they ministered to them. Not the honor of the messenger, but the welfare of the church was his goal!

The relationship between the messengers and those to whom the message was brought was very close. Paul says that they longed for these people. It is the kind of relationship which is not easy to understand for those who are not involved. They had been strangers to each other and had learned to know each other for such a brief time. Yet it was a relationship such as is seldom found in the world. The missionaries were delighted that they were able to impart the gospel to them, but this was not done in a cold manner. No, they wanted to impart themselves to these people. These people had become very dear to him and his helpers. God had shown His love to them, and those whom God loves, the Apostles love! In a short space of time they had indeed become brethren!

It has been charged that Paul was seeking to enrich himself at the expense of the people at Thessalonica. Well, he says, you know that that is a lie. They must remember how he labored while he was there. He took a "job" so that he would be able to meet his own expenses and not become a burden for the church. He was a tentmaker by trade (Acts 18:3) and may well have been engaged in this type of work while he was there. He did have the right, of course, to receive payment from the people in Thessalonica. Although this is often considered a touchy subject today, Paul did not consider it to be such. He refers to this matter time and again in his epistles (cf. II Cor. 9:6-15). It is the duty of the believers to support the labors of the ministers also with their gifts, and the measure in which they do so is also a measure of their spiritual strength. When things are normal the Apostle not only expects this, he demands it! However, there are also circumstances which prohibit the normal functioning of the church. His stay in Thessalonica was so brief. He did not desire to claim his rights but considered it more appropriate to labor with his hands and receive gifts from other churches. As a result, he had to work "night and day" while he was with them. The gospel had to be preached! To achieve this goal he would suffer all inconvenience. He was not laboring for himself—but for the Lord Who had called him!

He is in no way ashamed of the way in which they have conducted themselves in the time they were

laboring in this church. They had behaved themselves piously and righteously and unblameably. They had done everything humanly possible to bring the gospel and found the church at this place. These Thessalonians know it and he is, again, not afraid to call in the witness of God Himself. He has a clear conscience and rejects all the accusations which are brought against him.

Fatherly Encouragement

Had he earlier spoken of his work among them as that of a mother who cares for her children (vs. 7), he now likens his work in their midst to that of a father in the home. A mother "cherishes" the children, the father admonishes them. Yet, a father does not only admonish, he also encourages. So had this Apostle dealt with these people. As he testified concerning the gospel of Jesus Christ he admonished them to walk in the way shown them. He encouraged them when it seemed to be too difficult to walk this way. He dealt with them individually and as a group. These functions were always in complete harmony. He gave no different advice to the individual than he proclaimed from the pulpit.

"Walk Worthily of God"

The purpose of all his labors was to cause them to "walk worthily of God." But, who is sufficient to these things? Their manner of life is to be in harmony with the will of God. By the gospel they have also been called to a certain life-style. It does not only give a certain knowledge. It transforms the whole person! The kingdom of our God has come and by their faith they have become citizens of that kingdom. In all of life they are to be obedient to their new Sovereign. They belong to Him body and soul! However, they are not brought into a different slavery! The glory of His kingdom must be reflected in their lives. He desires—and makes—willing subjects! Walking before Him in the obedience of the gospel, they will experience that they have received the true freedom.

So he ends this section in which he defends himself against all attacks, on a strong positive note. ●

Questions for Discussion

1. What are the dangers found in the criticism of a minister of the gospel? Why is it so common?
2. Seeing that Paul mentions several times that they know these things and that they are witnesses of these things, why does he defend himself so strongly?
3. What was Paul and his companions' authority as Apostles of Christ? Does the office of the ministry have authority? What is meant by "ambassador"? Is that a serving office?
4. Why is a minister's salary often "a touchy matter"? How does Paul deal with this matter in his various epistles?
5. Can a minister's work be effective if he doesn't love the people whom he serves?
6. Can anyone "walk worthily of God"? What does this expression say concerning our use of the gospel which we hear?

GOD THE FRIEND AND PROTECTOR OF THE RIGHTEOUS

John Blankespoor

And Abraham drew near and said, Wilt thou consume the righteous with the wicked? Peradventure there are fifty righteous in the city: wilt thou consume and not spare the place for the fifty righteous that are therein? That be far from Thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked. Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? (Gen. 18:23-25)

A great calamity is about to take place. The measure of iniquity of the people of Sodom and Gomorrah is full. Their judgment day is very near. Through some physical calamity they simply will be erased from the face of the earth. And terrible it will be, as are all judgments of God upon the wicked.

The immediate setting of this chapter is that it is a hot day in Canaan. Abraham is sitting in the door of his tent, no doubt to catch a little breeze to be relieved from the heat. He sees three men approaching his tent. They are angels, in the form of men. One of them is the Son of God. Often he already appears to His people in this form, as He did later with the incarnation. Abraham invites them to stay for a meal. Bread is baked and a calf is killed and the meat prepared. Time evidently is not important. Imagine people waiting that long today to be served at the home of a friend! But the point of emphasis is that Abraham is God's friend. And it is characteristic of friends to have fellowship, but also to communicate. Friends tell each other secrets. Regarding the impending doom upon Sodom and Gomorrah, the Lord says, "Shall I hide from Abraham that which I do?" He is God's righteous friend. The Lord knows that Abraham will tell his children to keep the way of the Lord, to do righteousness and justice (vs. 19). Being such a friend who walks in the way of righteousness, God in His mercy is going to tell Abraham exactly what He is going to do. As a result Abraham will

know the true meaning of it all and why the cities will receive such judgments.

Isn't this basic principle always found in God's dealings with His people? Because He tells us, we have the answer to the big questions of history. The world doesn't have the interpretation of the basic meaning of history. But Christians do. That's what Christian education in the area of history is all about. In general He tells us why there are wars and catastrophes. Also that there have been antichrists and will be the great culmination of the Antichrist. Also that there will be the spirit of the lawless one and sin developing. Also that the church will be persecuted. But she must not think that at such times He is not in control. These events are to purify His people. All this amounts to God saying "Shall I not tell my friends, my children, what I am going to do in the last days?" If many of the predicted things would not happen, our faith would be shocked, since He has told us that they would come to pass. Because of God's love Christians are His friends.

But God is more, much more for His people. He is also the protector of His people, even when they don't always walk in faith as they should. When Abraham is told what God is going to do to these cities Abraham immediately thinks of Lot. And then not first of all as his blood relative, as a nephew, but as a Christian, as a righteous one. And he prays that God will spare the cities for the sake of the righteous. Will God spare them if there are fifty righteous? The answer is that He will. But there aren't fifty righteous! How about 45 then? And so the "dialogue" is carried on, from 45 to 40 and finally 10. But there aren't even 10 righteous. Abraham doesn't "dare" go any further.

What does all this mean? That Abraham is praying for Sodom and Gomorrah? Not directly, not at all. He is praying for righteousness, that the judge of all the earth will do right and that the righteous within the cities will not be "treated" like the wicked. If Sodom and Gomorrah would be spared, it would be for the sake of the righteous (the Church). This does happen in the history of the church (Jer.

29:7). Later Jeremiah must pray for the peace of Babylon for the sake of the peace of the church.

The main point of the entire history is that God is the Friend of the righteous. He tells them His secrets but also protects them. God is always righteous. Abraham quits praying with the number ten. But God shows that He will in His faithfulness spare the righteous always, even if there is only one. Lot surely sinned by living in Sodom. And the results are evident in the lives of his wife and daughters. What a sad history! His wife's heart is in the worldly cities. His daughters commit incest and become the ancestors of Moab and Edom, the children being fathered by their grandfather Lot. What a sad, sad history! Nevertheless, we read that Lot vexed his righteous soul when he lived in the midst of this wickedness. And what a comfort this is for all Christians. Never, never may we find an excuse for sinning in thinking that if God saved Lot in his sin He will also spare us. But the story does mean that we in our imperfections, and with our sins of infirmity, do have a God of amazing mercy and condescending love. All this points to the mercies of Jesus Christ.

And those who basically are righteous in Christ and love the Lord, shall be blessed. Always! Notice further what happens. In the end, does God spare Sodom and Gomorrah? By no means. He is right-

eous. In His righteousness and concern for His friend Lot He takes him out of the city. Lot is spared. Abraham's prayer essentially is answered. But the Judge of all the earth also does right in destroying the cities. What a demonstration of judgment they become for all future history!

We can learn much from this history. Sin is punished by a righteous God. Sin is also extremely "high-priced" for Lot, even though he is one of God's own. But he is one of God's friends. And God will always care for His people. It may be that in some circumstances the Lord delays sending judgments upon the world, but then the delay is for the sake of the righteous. It may also be that a given catastrophe is judgment for the unbeliever, but a chastisement for His people. In His love for His righteous friends He will always do what is right. He will always, always bless them. And in the end, what will happen? The wicked will be destroyed, but He will spare and give complete deliverance to the righteous, dividing the sheep from the goats. And because of Christ and for the sake of Christ in His righteousness He will give His people a new heaven and earth, without sin, in which they will always live with Him.

When we are His righteous friends, He will in love and righteousness ALWAYS bless us. ●



ON THE HOSPICE MOVEMENT

The Rev. Mr. E. L. Hebden Taylor's treatise entitled "First Legalized Abortion Now Legalized Euthanasia" in the June 1980 issue of the *Outlook* contains statements upon which I must comment.

My perspective is that of a Christian, professional critical care nurse with thirty years of nursing experience. For me, the challenge of "saving" the critically ill patient from death is stimulating and rewarding. I agree with the Rev. Mr. Taylor that the Christian should have no part in abortion or mercy killing. In fact, I have at one

time, experienced having to put my professional job on the line in a successful effort to keep from having to participate in abortion procedures.

The Rev. Mr. Taylor misrepresents the Hospice Movement when he says, "Those deemed terminally ill are not merely left to 'die with dignity' but are fed Brompton's mixture every three hours until the patient dies." Brompton's mixture and also Slessinger's solution are pharmaceutical combinations of pain reliever, tranquilizer and anti-nausea medications which allow terminal cancer patients to live out their final days with a consistent degree of mental lucidity and relative comfort. The preparations in solution for oral intake allow for more lucidity than do the traditional intramuscular injections. The medications are not prescribed to "kill the patient" as the Rev. Mr. Taylor seems to imply. Instead the patient is allowed the dignity of freedom from intractable pain, and thus the ability to communicate with his loved ones and his God while moving toward his natural earthly end into eternity.

Surely anyone who has witnessed a family member or friend experience the agony of terminal cancer pain is sympathetic to the patient's profound discomfort. Pain, anxiety and nausea relief are accepted humane as well as Christian approaches to the medical care of the terminally ill patient.

The Hospice Movement scarcely fits into a killer troika (abortion, euthanasia, hospice). The Hospice Movement founded in England and now modeled in the United States is dedicated to helping the terminally ill patient to live out his days at home

with the dignity of relative mental lucidity and comfort. Actually, the Hospice Movement is a return to our original Christian roots of care for the terminally ill at home by family and friends yet under medical supervision.

As a nurse of the Reformed persuasion, I regard it as extremely unfortunate that an individual in the position of Christian leadership occupied by the Rev. Mr. Taylor should so thoroughly confuse the distinctions between euthanasia, and death with dignity, and should undertake to speak ostentatiously about medical matters of which he is manifestly uninformed. In no way can the Hospice Movement be linked with euthanasia or abortion; medically, morally, theologically or otherwise.

One wonders what the Rev. Mr. Taylor thinks the motives were for the Christian sisters who in the Middle Ages and afterward dedicated their lives to the care of the terminally ill. Perhaps political bias is interfering with scholarship.

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REPLY:

Thank you for allowing me to reply to Nurse Hiemstra's reply to my article published last month "First Legalized Abortion Now Legalized Euthanasia," in your excellent magazine.

It has been truly said that the path to Hell has been paved with good intentions. I

do not for one moment question the sincerity nor the dedication to duty of Nurse Hiemstra, R.N. I fully agree with her desire to do everything possible to help terminally ill patients from suffering any more pain than is necessary.

However, I still stick with my assertions that the Hospice Movement is both anti-Christian and anti-scientific. I base my convictions upon two sources (a) Karen Steiner and Marie Mendez, "The Hospice Movement—Taking the Pain Out of Genocide," *New Solidarity*, Vol. IX, No. 62, October 6, 1978 and (b) Sandol Stoddard, *The Hospice Movement* (Briarcliff Manor, New York; Stein and Day, 1978).

According to these sources the Most Venerable Military and Hospitaller Order of St. John of Jerusalem during the eleventh century organized hospices as a "death cult" where the sick were administered hallucinogenic drugs *instead of medical treatment*. The hospices became known as the dissemination point for drugs and lethal poisons, often targeted at the Knights' humanist adversaries. (See also Nesta H. Webster, *Secret Societies*, London, 1954.)

In 1967, the Order of St. John resurrected the 11th century Hospice Movement at St. Christopher's Hospice in London, England. Here "patients" are administered a "pain killer" called the Brompton Mixture. As I pointed out in my article it consists of heroin, cocaine, alcohol, tranquilizers and chloroform water. It is administered every three hours—until the patient dies (for proof of this please consult the sources I have given above). According

to my way of thinking I do not think administering such a poison to a patient is a very Christian thing to do even if as Nurse Hiemstra claims this "medication" is designed to "allow terminal cancer patients to live out their final days with a consistent degree of mental lucidity and relative comfort."

In 1977, the Order of St. John launched a Hospice Movement in the United States. It advocates the decriminalization of heroin and cocaine—on the "humanitarian" grounds that everyone has the human right to die as he or she sees fit. Does Nurse Hiemstra subscribe to this apostate humanist doctrine? According to the Holy Bible only the Lord gives us life and only He can take it away (Job 1:21).

St. Matthew tells us that our blessed Savior was offered "vinegar to drink mingled with gall; and when he had tasted thereof, He would not drink" (Matt. 27:34). Would Nurse Hiemstra have offered Jesus a cup of the Brompton Mixture as He hung dying upon His Cross?

In the United States, The Hospice, Inc., is financed by the Kaiser Foundation, which includes on its board Kingman Brewster, a member of the Order of St. John. The Kaiser Foundation's involvement in the movement to legalize opium, cocaine and heroin for general public use dates back to at least 1958, when Dr. Timothy Leary conducted his first experiments with LSD at the Foundation's Kaiser Experimental Hospital in San Francisco (see Marilyn Ferguson, *The Aquarian Conspiracy*, Tarcher, 1980).

The other institution currently involved in financing the Hospice Movement in the

United States is the Joseph and Rose Kennedy Institute for the Study of Human Reproduction and Bioethics at Georgetown University (see Steiner and Mendez, *op. cit.*), a Jesuit run institution.

The Order of St. John also maintains significant influence on the board of directors of the Ford Foundation, the world's largest tax exempt funding conduit for Dionysian and death cults. On the board are John Loudon, a Commander in the Knights of St. John, the chairman of Royal Dutch, and Eugene Black, another Knight and former director of the World Bank (see *Who's Who in America* (Chicago: Marquis, 1974 and The Foundation Directory, 5th edition, New York). In short the Hospice Movement is just another front for the movement to legalize the use of drugs in this country, using dying patients as the thin edge of the wedge to break down the American people's rightful opposition to such corruption (see "Decrim Alert"; in *War on Drugs, Magazine of the National Anti-Drug Coalition*, Vol. 1, No. 1, June, 1980, 304 West 58th Street, 5th Floor, New York, N.Y. 10019).

As the father of five children I shall fight such movements whenever and wherever I come across them. It is time Christians in America woke up to those who want to play God over the people of America in deciding who shall live and who shall die (see Jay Katz, Alexander M. Capron and Swift Glass, *Experimentation with Human Beings* (1972) and Richard M. Restak, *Pre-meditated Man; Bioethics and the Control of Future Human Life* (1975).

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THE PROPHET JONAH by Hugh Martin. Paperback. Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Mich. \$6.95. Reviewed by Rev. Fred Gunnink.

Here is a commentary that should be welcomed into every preacher's library. Its sheer volume, 460 pages, gives the indication that a thorough study and exegesis has gone into its preparation. And the reader will not be disappointed. Every additional reference to the person of Jonah or his message has been dealt with.

Some may feel that too much material is presented. Nevertheless, the author's

treatment in this commentary is so complete that a wealth of sermon material can be obtained through its use.

Even though the book was originally written in the middle of the nineteenth century, the content will prove to be relevant for our day and age.

MAN OF GENEVA by Elsie M. Johnson. *The Banner of Truth Trust*, P.O. Box 623, Carlisle, Penn. 17013. Reviewed by Rev. Fred Gunnink.

A short book, 129 pages, about some of the interesting facets of the life of John Calvin. The book has been written primarily for young people. It is easy to read, interesting and condensed. You will not find the complete history of Calvin's life. Enough, however, is found to refresh your memory and possibly add some new details. For those who are not acquainted with the life of John Calvin, this booklet provides a good primer for additional reading.

HAL LINDSEY AND BIBLICAL PROPHECY by Cornelis Vanderwaal. Paideia Press, St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada, 1978. 139 pages, paperback, \$3.95. Reviewed by Rev. Louis Kerkstra, pastor of the Kelloggville Christian Reformed Church, Grand Rapids, MI.

Darbyist dispensationalism is the background of Hal Lindsey's thought and the source of his ideas in his best seller book, *The Late Great Planet Earth*. Vanderwaal contends that the dispensationalist error of using Biblical prophecy to make human predictions about the future arises from the failure to take the covenant into account. This results in "a Zionizing of Christian hope," and in pushing the church aside, thus undermining the centrality and significance of preaching. Scores of pious Christians have become infatuated with Hal Lindsey who has greatly popularized the dispensationalist approach to Biblical prophecy.

The danger of this approach is described by Vanderwaal as "... a revolutionary escapism that flees the here-and-now, sees no more promises to cling to, and waits for the overthrow of all that is good and just" (p. 44).

The rapid growth of dispensationalism, according to this book, stems from the cold formalism of churches which preach little more than middle class values, many of today's preachers more interested in ethical, political and ecological issues than in the Bible, and ignoring the covenantal, redemptive, historical approach to the Bible. Vanderwaal claims that Reformed people are not making use of the doctrine of the

covenant in interpreting N.T. "apocalyptic" passages: "They fail to deal with passages like Matthew 24, II Thessalonians 2, and Revelation 6-18 as covenant prophecy addressed to God's covenant people... that deals with their future against the background of the covenant relationship" (p. 99).

This book is refreshing in its emphasis on the covenant as the basis for interpreting all of Scripture. This is something we need to hear and stress again in our day. Vanderwaal's solution, however, arouses serious reservations. He argues for a re-dating of the entire New Testament, in wholehearted agreement with John A. T. Robinson who maintains that all of it, including the book of Revelation, was written before the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. This turns the above mentioned apocalyptic passages into prophecies which have been fully fulfilled. But while it does undercut the dispensationalist error of seeing only a vague "end time" fulfillment, it leans too far in the direction of seeing all of apocalyptic eschatology as already realized.

In summary, this book constitutes a valuable exposure of Lindsey's dispensationalism, and a challenging call to reemphasize covenant theology. Its concluding solution of calling for a complete reinterpretation of some basic Reformed eschatological beliefs, however, should be recognized as resting on a theory not adequately proved.

IS THE BIBLE A JIGSAW PUZZLE

by T. Boersma. Paideia Press, St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada, 1978. 193 pages, paperback, \$4.95. Reviewed by Rev. L. Kerkstra.

Why two books out of the Reformed community on the same subject? For this book also is a criticism of Hal Lindsey's views of prophecy. Personally I believe the two books are most helpful when used together. While Vanderwaal in the above reviewed book aimed his criticism at Lindsey in reference to his failure to take the covenant into account, Boersma faults him for his failure to see the national character of the church of the old dispensation. As a result, the church for Lindsey is merely an interlude between the O.T. times and the millennial kingdom of the end time. What is so serious about this is that Christ and His Church are not given "center stage." Rather Lindsey makes a "giant leap" from O.T. Israel which finds itself in the Middle East to the Israel of the end times.

Lindsey's method of interpretation of prophecy is that of piecing together prophecies like one puts together pieces of a jigsaw puzzle. By contrast, Boersma advocates taking into account the concrete historical situation and its relationship with the history of redemption (which also takes in the N.T.), together with the national framework of the prophecy. Only then will we arrive at the proper prophetic perspective with respect to the "day of the Lord."

Boersma does not go into the dispensationalist background of Lindsey's interpretation as did Vanderwaal. Rather he gives a more complete point by point evaluation of Lindsey's teachings and follows this with his own views on each prophecy or teaching. This book is therefore a valuable one for a Reformed Christian to have at his side if he plans to read Hal Lindsey's

books, *The Late Great Planet Earth*, and *There's a New World Coming*.

Rev. Boersma does not neglect or play down the element of further fulfillment of Biblical prophecies. He holds that the O.T. prophecies were promises of redemption, many of which bear on Israel's return out of captivity, but that this in no way exhausts such promises. Further stages of these promises are to be found in Christ's birth, death, and resurrection; in the establishment and expansion of the church throughout the world; and in Christ's return when the church will share fully in God's salvation in the New Jerusalem.

It is Lindsey's giant leap from O.T. prophecy to the end time, rather than the telescopic view of progressive fulfillment which causes him to come up with all sorts of bizarre conclusions such as that Ezekiel prophesied about Russia, and Daniel about a twentieth century Arab-African power and that China will invade the Middle East with 200 million troops.

There is a distinction made by Boersma between the "man of lawlessness" mentioned by Paul in II Thessalonians and the Antichrist mentioned by the Apostle John. He does not interpret these as being persons, however, but maintains that they represent forces. The "man of lawlessness" he sees as representing political forces which attack the true church from outside and the Antichrist as representing apostate forces within the church itself. With this assessment this reviewer does not agree.

All in all, Boersma's *Jigsaw Puzzle* is a helpful analysis of Hal Lindsey's dubious method of scouting through Scripture to find prophecies which he can fit into his preconceived notions of what is to happen in the end time. And just as we in Reformed circles need a renewed emphasis on the covenant, as advocated by Vanderwaal in the above reviewed book, so also we need to have the importance and significance of the church throughout both the old and the new dispensations stressed, as Boersma does. The concepts "covenant" and "church" are, of course, not contrasting concepts, but harmonizing elements in Scriptural teaching.

Books such as Vanderwaal's and Boersma's are in a sense long overdue. It is interesting that they should come from Dutch authors looking across the sea rather than from American authors in the Reformed community who live in a hotbed of dispensationalism in this country. Hopefully these books will serve to counteract the inroads which dispensationalism is making into the Reformed community so that Reformed believers will be less likely to join in playing the dispensationalist's jigsaw puzzle game with Scripture.

HE GATHERS THE LAMBS, by Cornelius Lambregtse (translated by Harry der Nederlanden); Paideia Press, St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada; 290 pp; \$7.95; hard cover. Reviewed by JVP

His lifespan covered only a brief four years, every day of which Fransje Westrate lived to the full. His endless questioning about this world and also about the world to come was a constant challenge especially to his God-fearing mother who tried conscientiously to answer him the

best she knew how. At the tender age of four Fransje was gathered as a precious lamb into heaven where he hoped he might sit on Jesus' lap as he had seen the children do in a Bible picture-book. The strain of emotionalism, overwhelming at times even for the more phlegmatic reader, is reputedly typical of Zeelanders in the Netherlands. The story is well told, the characters clearly drawn, and the nature scenes with their seasonal changes outstanding.

Cornelius Lambregtse, the author, emigrated to the U.S.A. in 1947, studied at Calvin College, for two years taught Dutch language at Calvin, and has since 1950 been busy writing, editing, and translating. He also serves as an elder in the Netherlands Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan.

He Gathers the Lambs, says the author, has been written: "In precious memory of my only son CALVIN JOHN who at the age of three years and seven months had finished his earthly sojourn and on the day of his departure said 'I am going home to Jesus. Don't cry, Daddy'."

What may be a strain of religious subjectivism and mysticism in this book might lead some to be less than enthusiastic in their acceptance of it. However a book as wholesome and edifying, and also as well written as *He Gathers the Lambs*, is nevertheless appreciated in sharp contrast to the demoralizing and shameless debauchery in so much of modern fiction. Amid an avalanche of poison in print, this quaint story about a devout and fascinating little fellow named Fransje is a precious exception deserving of wide acceptance.

THE MOON, ITS CREATION, FORM AND SIGNIFICANCE by John C. Whitcomb and Donald B. De Young. Cloth-bound, 1978. BMH Books, Winona Lake, Indiana, 46590. \$5.95. Reviewed by JVP.

When, just a few years ago, man first set foot on the moon, interest in that heavenly body rose to a fever pitch and the President of the U.S. called that achievement "the greatest thing since Creation." Although that intense and wide-spread interest has not been sustained, the authors of this highly informative volume rightly observe that "the time for a careful re-appraisal has surely come."

"This book," Apollo 15 Astronaut James B. Irwin has said, "presents the best comparison of the various moon origin theories I have ever seen. I congratulate the authors on this material." This evaluation by one in a position to know is reassuring for the average reader hardly competent to judge as to the accuracy of the scientific data provided. Moreover, being decidedly true to Scripture all the way, this timely book deserves an honored place in the Christian classroom, on the shelves of every church and school library, and in the hands of everyone interested to know more about what the authors refer to as our "nearest astronomical neighbor." While moon worship is clearly an abomination to the Lord, indifference and disinterest as to this part of His amazing creation are surely not pleasing to Him either.

For the special price of \$5.95 offered to our readers (regular price \$7.95) the book should be ordered from Dr. John C. Whitcomb, Grace Theological Seminary, Winona Lake, Indiana 46590.

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Edwin H. Palmer*

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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.

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

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