

THE OUTLOOK

DEVOTED TO THE EXPOSITION AND DEFENSE OF THE REFORMED FAITH

OCTOBER 1981



D. M. LLOYD JONES
THE WAY INTERNATIONAL
THE GOSPEL OF VIOLENCE

DAVID MARTYN LLOYD-JONES

a tribute and an appreciation

John Richard de Witt

Who can say whether this preacher or that is the greatest of his generation? Such evaluations are, one is glad to acknowledge, in other hands than our own. There can be no question, however, but that Dr. David Martyn Lloyd-Jones was a very great preacher indeed; and some do not hesitate to speak of him as among the premier preachers of the church since the Protestant Reformation. Thousands of people all around the world felt themselves stricken with a heavy sense of loss when the Lord took him on the first day of March, 1981.

His Life

The facts of his life are soon told. He was born in Cardiff, South Wales, on December 20, 1899, but was raised till his fifteenth year in rural Cardiganshire. In 1914 he moved with his family to London, where he concluded his basic education at St. Marylebone Grammar School. His medical studies he took at Bart's Hospital, one of London's preeminent teaching hospitals. By the time he was twenty-five Dr. Lloyd-Jones was already working with Sir Thomas Horder in Harley Street, having done so brilliantly in all his medical examinations that his future as a prominent medical doctor and cardiologist was assured.

Other, and we may think better, things were in store for him, however. By 1926 he was committed to the service of the gospel; and in 1927 he became minister of the Bethlehem Forward Movement Church, Sandfields, Aberavon (a congregation of the Presbyterian Church of Wales). After a fruitful and effective ministry there, he was inducted minister of Westminster Chapel, London, as colleague of Dr. G. Campbell Morgan. It was at Westminster Chapel that Dr. Lloyd-Jones did his most notable work as a minister of Christ. There he preached with incomparable power and influence for full thirty years, till his retirement in August, 1968. Upon his recovery from the illness that had necessitated his resignation from Westminster Chapel, Dr. Lloyd-Jones con-

tinued to preach throughout the length and breadth of England, Scotland, and Wales. His active ministry only came to an end with a renewed onslaught of illness in mid-1980.

Along with his pastoral ministry Dr. Lloyd-Jones managed to find time for many other tasks as well, all of them related to the preaching and teaching of the gospel. He was long president of the Evangelical Library; frequently of the Intervarsity Christian Fellowship; conference speaker in North America, Europe, and South Africa; council member of the China Inland Mission (now the Overseas Missionary Fellowship). He was the inspiration behind the Evangelical Movement of Wales; chairman and leader of the Puritan and Westminster Conferences; helper and adviser to the Banner of Truth Trust; and author of twenty-three volumes, mostly of biblical exposition.

The Preacher

In a comment upon the occasion of Dr. Lloyd-Jones's death, Prof. Donald MacLeod, of the Free Church College, Edinburgh, wrote of him that he was "known throughout the English-speaking world as one of the greatest preachers since the Reformation." Others have spoken similarly. One has to have spent some time in evangelical circles in Britain to appreciate the stature of "the Doctor," as he was everywhere called, and to understand how it was that he came to occupy his commanding position of influence and leadership. "The church in Britain today is vastly different from what it was in 1927 when Dr. Lloyd-Jones began his ministry in Port Talbot" — these are Donald MacLeod's words. "Conservative evangelicalism enjoys a new, and perhaps dangerous, respectability. There is an interest in the literary heritage of English-speaking Calvinism which would have been unthinkable 50 years ago. There has been a significant increase in the number of men preaching the doctrines of grace. These developments owe much to the Doctor — a

fact which is all the more remarkable when one considers that he cared little for founding new organisations or establishing new institutions. He gave himself unsparingly to labouring in the word and in teaching."

Prof. MacLeod continues, "That example of total commitment to preaching is his greatest legacy. For it, he turned his back on a brilliant medical career; and from it he refused to be diverted by the plausible attractions of academic life, ecclesiastical management or a literary ministry. 'Preaching,' he said, 'is the highest and the greatest and the most glorious calling to which anyone can ever be called.'"

It is as a preacher that he will always be known. And what a preacher he was! I had the privilege of hearing him on a number of occasions. Sometimes he was better than others, no doubt; surely that is always the case with preachers, whether eminent or not. But he was always himself; and he was always passionate; and he was always speaking of Christ. The services at Westminster Chapel were plain by prevailing standards. Perhaps the most notable departure from ancient non-conformist worship in Britain was the organ which was used for public worship. Otherwise the services were very like those described in the Westminster Assembly's Directory for the Public Worship of God. Plainness does not by any means amount to barrenness, however. We need to remind ourselves again and again that this is so. The most elaborate and finely prepared liturgy may be a stench in the nostrils of God — if for no other reason than that it calls attention to itself. Plainness, if it be the simplicity of the evangelical worship of the New Testament, on the other hand, may be redolent with the glory and splendor of the gospel. It certainly was that when Dr. Lloyd-Jones was minister of Westminster Chapel. Worship there was marked by awe, wonder, a sense of the presence of God in the midst of his people, and by the sheer power of the Word. It was an unforgettable experience to be led by the Doctor in prayer. His prayers were by no means ornate, but they were always reverent. He did not thrust himself forward; the preacher did not obtrude himself upon the awareness of the congregation. Rather, a humble servant of Christ gathered the people in his arms, and together they approached the throne of grace in adoration and petition.

When one thinks of Dr. Lloyd-Jones as a preacher the question immediately arises, *What made him great in the proclamation of the Word of God?* What is a great preacher? The answer to such questions is no easy matter. I think, however, that at least a few suggestions can be put forward.

First, Dr. Lloyd-Jones had received a first-rate education and was gifted with extraordinary natural endowments. He did not ever attend a theological seminary; but his classical British secondary schooling and the discipline of his medical training prepared him for the study of the Scriptures and of theology. All things considered, he was a divine of a very high order. Moreover, he had a brilliant mind, an expressive and resonant voice, an unusual ability to grasp profound ideas and make them under-

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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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standable in communication, and an incredible presence. He himself would have said, I think, that "presence" in the sense in which we use the term here comes from the inside; it has its roots in theology, in the preacher's own apprehension of what he is about in all its awful dignity and power. That is certainly true. But David Martyn Lloyd-Jones was a born leader of men, and that was nowhere so evidently apparent as when he stood in the pulpit.

Second, Dr. Lloyd-Jones was careful and diligent in his preparation for preaching, in the more general as well as in the more particular meaning of the word. One of the most memorable afternoons I spent during my two years in London was in my own flat on the occasion when I had the privilege of entertaining the Doctor to tea. He was preaching for the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the opening of the chapel building. Between the services of the day Dr. Lloyd-Jones came next door with me for a light meal and some talk. I recall how impressed I was by his erudition, by his wide reading, and by the penetrating keenness of his mind. He was then in his late sixties, but he had by no means stopped learning, studying, reading, in a broad spectrum of subjects. His intellect was richly furnished with materials which he was able to press into the service of his exposition of the Scriptures. I do not believe that he would have permitted himself the indulgence of appearing in the pulpit without assiduous work beforehand. His view of what took place there was far too elevated for that.

Third, one has to call attention to his remarkable boldness. Donald MacLeod speaks of his "persistent, remorseless application" in preaching. In our part of the country people sometimes say of a preacher who is no longer dwelling in generalities that he has "left off preaching and gone to meddling." There is a very real sense in which one had not begun to preach unless he has "gone to meddling." Of what possible use is abstract preaching, withdrawn from the perceptions and needs of the people, remote from their experience. The strength of Puritan preaching lay, not only in its intensely biblical character, but also in its vital concern to bring the truth home, to apply it, to apply it closely to those who heard. This Dr. Lloyd-Jones did also in a forceful and poignant way, showing neither fear nor favor, exhorting, rebuking, admonishing, because he himself knew the terror of the Lord.

*Fourth, I think that no small part of Dr. Lloyd-Jones' power as a preacher lay in his acquaintance with the human scene. He did not preach up the times; rather, he preached Jesus Christ. But he knew the times, and he knew the hearts of his people. I have often thought that his training as a physician stood him in good stead here. Perhaps this comes out most clearly in his excellent book *Spiritual Depression: Its Causes and Cure*. There, in the pages of that volume, one finds the pastor speaking, but also the physician — the physician of the body now becomes the physician of the soul. Dr. Lloyd-Jones was anything but a political, psychological, or sociological preacher. And yet it would be*

impossible to accuse him of irrelevance in his ministry. People came to Westminster Chapel from every background; what a mixed congregation it was, a strangely assorted congregation! But they came to him because they knew that in him they had an under-shepherd who could apply the medicine of the gospel to their lives, and through whose preaching Christ could cure them and make them whole.

Fifth, if he was characterized by anything at all it was by his supreme confidence in the power of the preaching of the Word of God. All the world knows that the Doctor kept to his Bible: it was the basis, the polestar, the foundation for all he said and did during his more than fifty years of preaching. Almost all his published sermons are in the nature of a consecutive exposition of books and passages of Scripture. But more than that, Dr. Lloyd-Jones was instrumental, as few men have been, in reviving faith among the people of his generation in the spiritual dynamic of the Word proclaimed. Once after World War II Emil Brunner attended a service at Westminster Chapel, and afterward exclaimed, "Now that is Reformed preaching!" It was. It was indeed. In his view of preaching the Doctor showed his spiritual kinship with John Calvin whose doctrine of preaching was Lloyd-Jones's own. I sometimes think that the Doctor in a way represented a time between the times with respect to the Christian pulpit. He entered upon his ministry in a day when there was not much conviction that preaching could do anything. In the last few years, especially in quarters where there was once much rejoicing at able and faithful preaching of the gospel, people seem again to have lost their way and to be looking everywhere but in the direction prescribed by the Scriptures for the renewal and health of the church. Perhaps Dr. Lloyd-Jones may remind us even now, though he has been taken away from us, and remind us in a mighty way, that God is pleased by the foolishness of the preaching to save those who believe.

Sixth, the Doctor's profound personal experience with the Lord Jesus Christ, and his hearty commitment to him, sustained and supported his whole ministry. For the love of Christ he turned his back upon the fame and plaudits of the world. To him it was no sacrifice at all in comparison with the knowledge of the Redeemer.

Those who wish to know what Dr. Lloyd-Jones himself thought about preaching should read his splendid book *Preaching and Preachers*. It is an indispensable work, and I should think that a theological student — certainly one in the Reformed tradition — must be ashamed were he to complete his course of study without having read it at least once — and preferably again and again. It is also a book for ministers, and for anyone interested in preaching.

What can we learn from him? We can thank God for him and for the wonderful gift of God to us in him. Most of us who are ministers cannot be great preachers, in the sense that the Doctor was great. But we can be useful men of God and ministers of

the imperishable gospel. We who are evangelicals and committed to the Reformed faith not infrequently find ourselves losing confidence in the proclamation of the Word of God. We are exposed to so little that would inspire and encourage us. And we have a hard time taking seriously what the Scriptures tell us about preaching. Can it be that the Lord means for us to rely on what seems in so many ways to be a vain and futile exercise — the more vain and futile in view of what the world is, what it seems to be becoming? But then we listen again to the authentic voice of the preacher: of the Lord Jesus Christ himself, as Paul promises us, speaking through the lips of those men whom he has separated to himself and to his service. We listen to the

likes of a David Martyn Lloyd-Jones. And we remember. We remember what preaching is, and what it can do — what it must do when God blesses and uses and empowers it. Then our doubting, fearful hearts are stilled. We know that, till the last little one for whom Christ died has been brought in, the joyful sound will reach to the ends of the earth and will accomplish that whereto God sends it. ☉

Note: The quotations from Prof. Donald MacLeod are taken from The Monthly Record, the magazine of the Free Church of Scotland, April, 1981.

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Bible Break-Through in Bolivia

Peter De Jong

In the special Summer 1981 edition of *Jubilee* in which the Wycliffe Bible Translators celebrate their 50th anniversary Luis Palau tells a story to gladden Christian hearts. Observing that "God runs history through faithful men and women, individuals like you and me, brothers and sisters who are obedient in little things," he introduces to us one of Wycliffe's pioneer workers in Bolivia — David Farah. David and his wife Gloria went to Bolivia in 1956 to translate the Bible for a tiny language group in the jungle, praying that the Lord would reach this country with the gospel. Illness compelled them to leave their village work and move to La Paz, the capital. There his work for the translators brought him into contact with a government educational official, an army colonel with whom he became friends. In a sudden revolution the colonel disappeared. He reappeared a year later in a foreign embassy. In David's prayerful concern for his friend, he succeeded in having an autographed New Testament conveyed to him in the embassy by a guard. In another revolution seven months later the colonel emerged as Bolivia's new president. He had appreciated and read the New Testament. He said that it was the only real contact that anyone had made with him while in political asylum. He was deeply concerned about the moral condition of his country. In the Lord's amazing Providence, David's individual con-

tact and friendship with the president led to the opening of prime time television to gospel presentation, to distributing 600,000 copies of the New Testament in all the primary and secondary schools of the country five years ago, and to its study in religion classes for 2½ years. Mr. Palau stated that "The New Testament is being read in hundreds of thousands of homes because of one Wycliffe person who had a passion for the land and was faithful. The Lord . . . opened up Bolivia." The government has recently asked the World Home Bible League for at least 250,000 study booklets, 10,000 corresponding teachers' manuals, and 250,000 more New Testaments for the school program. The president has also requested 100,000 more New Testaments for military barracks, homes for the aged, orphanages, hospitals and other dependencies. We are reminded that in the world of apparent economic, social and political turmoil, the Lord is in control. "The heart of the king is in the hand of the Lord. Like rivers of water He turns it wherever He wills" (Prov. 21:1). It is heartening to catch a glimpse, underneath the superficial trivia that makes up much of the news, of the really great work He is doing with His gospel. May we, like David Farah, prayerfully and faithfully seize whatever opportunities the Lord may give us to have a part in that. ●

A Brief Summary of The Way International and its Primary Teachings

Louis Kerkstra

The "Way" movement is causing considerable confusion in some communities. This article shows that it is *a different way of salvation* than the Biblical way taught by traditional Christianity.

1. The Founder

The founder of The Way International is Victor Paul Wierwille, who was born in 1917 and raised in the Evangelical and Reformed Church. He claims that God spoke to him audibly in 1942 telling him that He would teach Wierwille "the Word as it had not been known since the first century" if he would teach it to others. In 1953, he learned to "receive the holy spirit into manifestation," that is, he learned to speak in tongues.

2. The Foundation

The Word of God "rightly divided" is the foundation on which The Way movement rests. Wierwille, as a modern apostle who believes he was chosen by God to bring new light to the present generation, is held by his followers to be the present day spiritual leader who can "rightly divide" the Word. Present day versions and translations of the Bible are considered inaccurate and believed to contain errors. When interpreted and "corrected" by the spiritual leader, Wierwille, the Bible then becomes the "accurate" Word of God which followers can also "rightly divide."

3. The Structure

The way is structured like a tree. The Board of Directors is the *root*. The Headquarters in New Knoxville, Ohio, is the *trunk*. State organizations constitute the *limbs*, while city groups are the *branches*. Bible study groups in homes and on campuses are the *twigs*, and individual members of such groups are the *leaves*. Since 1953 when Wierwille

began his first PFAL (Power for Abundant Living) class, this Tree has grown into an organization which sends thousands of followers out each year throughout the United States and other nations as ambassadors to advance its cause. Especially since 1968, its growth has accelerated greatly.

4. VIEW OF GOD

This is similar to the ancient Arian heresy. The Way rejects the doctrine of the Trinity (that there is one supreme Being consisting of three distinct Persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit). Rather, the supreme Being of God is believed to consist of only one Person. God is called Father in relation to His creation of Jesus Christ in a unique way. He is called Holy Spirit when He is viewed as the Giver of holy spirit, which is "impersonal power from on high." So The Way's view of God is a form of Unitarianism.

5. View of Man & Sin

Prehistoric man is believed to have existed during the time of a first earth. This first earth may have lasted for trillions of years before it "became without form and void." The creation of man as we know him took place after the second earth was brought into being. Man was then created as a tripartite being or creature. God *formed* man's body, *made* his soul, and *created* his spirit.

Man sinned by choosing to let his bodily senses rule his mind instead of receiving divine communications and being ruled by the spirit within him. As a result man lost his spirit and reverted to being only a body and soul creature. By so doing, Adam transferred his legal rights to rule the world to Satan. He also suffered the loss of fellowship with God which can only take place through the spirit which he lost when he sinned. Sin, therefore, consists mainly of choosing the wrong option and thereby forfeiting legal rights and losing the ability to have fellowship with God.

6. View of Christ

Jesus Christ is *not* God. This is one of the most emphatic assertions of The Way movement. He may be called "The Son of God" because of the special

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way in which God brought him into being. Prior to his conception and birth, Jesus only existed in the foreknowledge of God. To bring about his birth, God created the sperm and impregnated Mary with it by overshadowing her. Such overshadowing, Wierwille has stated, took place in much the same way a bull covers a cow to bring about conception.

Because Jesus had no human father through whose sperm sin is believed to be transmitted, he could remain sinless. Being sinless, he was a tripartite man with body, soul *and spirit*. Therefore, he could communicate with God through his spirit; and by means of his senses he could communicate with man what he had learned from God. In this way he could bring man to faith — to believing. Also as a sinless man with body, soul and spirit, he won back the legal rights needed for man's restoration.

So according to The Way, Jesus is a sinless man brought into existence by God. He is no more than a man. Yet he can be called Son of God because God created and implanted the sperm by means of which he was conceived.

7. View of Salvation

Salvation involves restoration of legal rights which Adam forfeited to Satan. By shedding sinless blood, Jesus bought back these legal rights. In order to receive these legal rights on an individual basis, a person must act. He must believe and obey. Otherwise God's hands are tied and He can not save that person.

By confessing Jesus as Lord, and believing God raised him from the dead, God creates a new spirit in that person. So that person becomes a new creature having a body, soul *and spirit*. With this new spirit the believer can have fellowship with God.

It is choosing the right seed which determines whether a person will or will not believe and thus receive the new spirit. This freedom to choose God's seed or the devil's seed determines a person's destiny. Some people go all through life without ever making a choice. What becomes of them is not stated.

In Old Testament times, God adopted people to be His children because the seed was not available for them to choose. After Pentecost the seed was available and people become heirs of God by choosing the Father's seed. Thus they become children of God by birth rather than adoption.

To have fellowship with God, a believer must continually renew his mind. If this is not done, even though that person is saved, fellowship with God is lost and that person leads a defeated life. This is the category in which most non-Way Christians are thought to be living.

8. View of the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is another designation for God. He is not believed to be another Person in the Godhead, but only is a different name for God which is used when God is viewed as the Giver of holy spirit. This gift of holy spirit is impersonal power from on high. For spiritual growth to take place, a

believer must manifest holy spirit. This is done by speaking in tongues. By speaking in tongues, which any believer can do, the spirit is edified, true worship takes place, and unselfish prayer is offered. By praying to receive holy spirit, and then moving the lips, tongue and throat so as to make sounds and form words, the Holy Spirit (God) will give the utterance. This is, therefore, a mechanical process. It is a deep-breathing exercise which initiates the manifestation of holy spirit.

9. View of the Church and Sacraments

The Way has formulated a peculiar form of dispensationalism which ties in with its view of two different kinds of children of God — by adoption (pre-Pentecost) and by birth (post-Pentecost). Pre-Pentecost, adopted children of God, belonged to the Bride of Christ. This is a church held in abeyance during the present dispensation of Grace. During the Age of Grace, from Pentecost on, both Jews and Gentiles who believe belong to the Body of Christ.

Bride of Christ (adopted) believers are people without spirits. They have only souls and bodies because spirit was not yet available when they were adopted to be God's children. After Pentecost, when holy spirit became available, believers became members of a different Church called the Body of Christ. The Church of the Body comes to expression in the supervised meetings in private homes which are supervised by a pastor or head elder. Unneeded possessions are to be turned over to the Church for the work of ministry. Private opinions are forbidden in the Church of the Body. No one may differ from the primary spiritual leader, Victor Paul Wierwille, who is looked upon as the modern day apostle.

Water baptism is not for members of the Body of Christ. It was only for members of the Bride of Christ. On Pentecost, baptism with holy spirit replaced water baptism which belonged to the dispensation of Law.

In the Lord's Supper, the two elements have different purposes. One is for physical welfare, the other for spiritual welfare. By way of the cup, a believer receives remission and/or forgiveness of sins. Partaking of the bread brings about physical healing. If a believer ingests the bread believingly, he need never be sick. This is exercising one of the believer's legal rights.

10. View of the Hereafter

When a Christian dies, he goes to *hades*, to gravedom. The belief that a believer's soul goes to heaven to be with Christ when his body dies is declared an erroneous doctrine inspired by Satan. The time from death to resurrection is a time of great void for the believer. Nothing significant happens to him before the return of Christ.

The return (*parousia*) of Christ is in two stages. The first part is the gathering together in which Christ comes *for* his Church of the Body. He then raises all body, soul and spirit (tripartite) believers with incorruptible bodies, and believers still living put on immortality. In the second part of the

parousia, Christ comes *with* his Church of the Body. When this happens, then pre-Pentecost (body and soul only) believers are raised. Sometime later unbelievers are also raised. This happens during the *apokalupsis* (apocalypse). This resurrection of unbelievers is only temporary. They will later meet a second and final death. What happens to unbelievers between the apocalypse (when they are raised) and the time of their second death is not spelled out. Nor does The Way, as yet, seem to have dealt with the question of what happens to those who never make a choice as to whether to be born of the Father's seed, or of the devil's seed. There are, therefore, gaps in The Way's teachings on the last things (eschatology).

Conclusion

From a careful study of the teachings of The Way International it can be seen that its views are derived from old heresies and from peculiar twists given to current fundamental, dispensational and pre-millennial teachings. There is even a touch of Calvinism which has also been perverted. As a whole, it adds up to a man-made, do-it-yourself religion. Its most dangerous aspects are the denial of the true Being of God (rejecting the Trinity) and degrading of the Lord Jesus Christ (claiming that

he is not God). It also disparages and changes many of the Biblical concepts of salvation held by Christians everywhere. It constitutes a real danger to those whose knowledge of the Bible is superficial, as well as for those whose relationship to the organized Church is strained.

Those who feel drawn to The Way movement, whose founder arbitrarily changes or explains away basic passages and teachings of the Bible itself, do well to be aware of the warning found in Revelation 22:18, 19

I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds anything to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book. And if anyone takes away from this book of prophecy, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and of the holy city, which are described in this book. (New International Version)

Wierwille's *Way* of salvation is based on freely adding to and arbitrarily taking away from Scripture. All sincere Christians ought to be aware of this and be on their guard against accepting the views of such a man. Like the Bereans of the first century, Christians should examine the Scriptures every day "...to see if what Paul said was true..." (Acts 17:11b). If they do this, they will find that much of what Victor Paul (Wierwille) says is not true. ●

THE GOSPEL OF VIOLENCE

Peter De Jong

THE GOSPEL OF VIOLENCE by David Kingdon, *A Significant Booklet Published by Carey Publications, 5 Fairford Close, Haywards Heath, Sussex RH16 3EF (England), 16pp. \$1.50.*

Since the Reformation there has been some difference of conviction as to whether a Christian must continue to submit even to a bad government as "the ordinance of God," as William Tyndale maintained, or whether he must resist and seek to overthrow a wicked and tyrannical government as the servant of the devil, as John Knox and John Milton argued. Today an influential group of theologians are advocating not merely resistance to tyrannical

government, but (1) "radical, revolutionary restructuring of society," including (2) redistribution of wealth, (3) as a means of salvation.

This contemporary "theology of revolution" has arisen out of especially these factors. The post-colonial era has not brought freedom to the masses. The expectations of the poor have been raised. Modern technology has destroyed the idea that grinding poverty is inevitable. Marxism has provided a tool for guiding revolutionary action. And many Christians have seen in the Bible elements which can be used to frame a theology of revolution.

Today it has become fashionable for the Church, or large parts of it, to support revolutionary "libera-

tion" movements. They often seek Biblical grounds for such support in (1) God's deliverance of His people in the Exodus, (2) drawing an analogy between Christ's suffering, death and resurrection and revolutionary struggles ("The Cuban or Vietnamese revolution is a type of the resurrection in the sense that we speak of Old Testament events as types of Christ."), (3) portraying Jesus as a revolutionary Zealot, (4) interpreting Biblical salvation as social and worldly revolution and (5) identifying such social revolution with the Christian "hope."

This "theology of revolution" has a strong popular appeal especially in countries in which there are extreme differences between rich and poor and many obvious injustices. Despite the efforts to find Biblical arguments to support the revolutionary movement, it is evident at many points that this movement did not arise out of Biblical Christianity but that it necessarily brings its adherents into conflict with it. The promoters of revolution have lost faith in the influence of God's Word and Spirit and substitute for it reliance on the violent use of human power. Their trust in violence and appeals to what is expedient, produce injustices. Their commitment to the ruthless use of power flatly contradicts the gospel's injunctions to love our neighbors and to forgive. The Lord Himself rejected the popular revolutionary political movements of the New Testament times. The revolutionary belief that the new man and the new society can be created out of human violence is not Christian. The Christian faith is not in human violence but in the grace of God in Christ. The Christian anticipates "the new Jerusalem which, in contradistinction from all revolutionary Utopias, comes down from God out of Heaven."

This in general is the line of argument of this fascinating 15-page booklet which deals in an unusually clear and convincing manner with a movement that seems to be gaining strength in our time. We see a number of indications of its influence within as well as outside of our churches. Some of the foreign mission reports, discussions about world hunger and relief and reports about academic discussions suggest that there is growing sympathy also among us for this "liberation" theology. David Kingdon's little booklet may help us to understand and counteract a misguided movement.

A Recurring Problem

In trying to deal fairly and effectively with this currently urgent problem of the popular "liberation" or "revolutionary" movement, we ought to notice first that this is not, as many think, a new problem. It has many close similarities to the French Revolution of the late 1700s. Current cries against injustices, and economic inequalities, and for "liberation" and the restructuring of society, and the resort to violence to achieve such goals all parallel what happened in France. That revolution, it may be recalled, far from producing the envisioned Utopia of the philosophers, speedily degenerated into successively more bloody "reigns of terror," until a weary and disillusioned people eagerly welcomed

Napoleon, the dictator, who restored law, order and public safety.

It is a curious fact that England, whose society had many of the same abuses which provoked revolution in France, did not undergo the bloody tragedy of France. Its gross abuses were to a considerable degree rectified in a much more constructive and orderly way. What accounted for the difference between developments in the two adjacent and similar countries? D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones in his *Sermon on the Mount* (Vol. 1, p. 157 on Matt. 5:13, the "salt of the earth" passage) wrote

Most competent historians are agreed in saying that what undoubtedly saved this country from a revolution such as was experienced in France at the end of the eighteenth century was nothing but the Evangelical Revival. This was not because anything was done directly, but because masses of individuals had become Christian, and were living this better life and had this higher outlook. The whole political situation was affected, and the great Acts of Parliament which were passed in the last century were mostly due to the fact that there were such large numbers of individual Christians to be found in this land.

Anyone who wishes to explore this fascinating subject further may profitably turn to the French historian, M. Halevy's, *A History of the English People in the Nineteenth Century* (Vol. 1, p. 387ff.). He wrote of the evangelical revival, "We shall attempt to find here the key to the problem whose solution has hitherto escaped us; for we shall explain by this movement the extraordinary stability which English Society was destined to enjoy throughout a period of revolution and crises; what we may truly term the miracle of Modern England..." (cf. also pp. 424, 425).

If one asks the further question, "Why did France experience no such revival?" one ready answer is that France had long since destroyed or driven out its evangelical Christians, the Huguenots, since the massacre of St. Bartholomew.

"Anti-Revolutionary" Christians

Our socially conscious Christians of today who find themselves attracted to or pressured by the revolutionary (or "liberation" propaganda appeal to their social conscience might profitably learn from our Dutch forebears who, driven by an equally keen sense of social responsibility, but directed and motivated by the Biblical gospel, established an "Anti-revolutionary Party" and movement to counteract what they correctly saw was the anti-Christian popular revolutionary movement. The fact that their anti-Revolutionary party has now, after a hundred years, largely capitulated to the enemy and disbanded should not prevent us, who are faced by essentially the same problem, from studying and profiting by the Biblical and historical lessons the Lord taught our predecessors.

We need more, and more extensive, studies of the kind David Kingdon gives us in his criticism of "the gospel of violence." 6

MEDITATION

Elihu's "Solution" to Job's Problem

John Blankespoor

*Or a man may be chastened on a bed of pain.
Job. 33:19*

*But those who suffer he delivers in their suffering, he speaks to them in their affliction. He is wooing you from the jaws of distress, to a spacious place free from restriction.
Job. 36:15, 16.*

The three friends of Job have finished speaking, accusing him of special great sins as the cause of all his incredible suffering. Now they are silent. Job, too, is quiet. The long dialogues and heated debates they have had show that the question with which they have wrestled does not have an easy solution, neither theoretically, nor practically. Therefore the silence that ensues is not one in the evening following a busy day or after a severe storm. It is a silence in the middle of the day, that precedes more struggles and storms of the soul. Job must have an answer. Heaven will therefore have to intervene. In afflictions all Christians living in faith must have answers, not only after awhile, in the hereafter, but already in time, if they will have peace of mind and soul and respond as God wants them to.

Elihu, the fourth friend appears on the scene. Because he is younger than the rest in humility he has let the older ones speak first. It is worthwhile to take notice of some of his remarks and opinions. God is greater than man. This he emphasizes. In the light of this truth he asks Job, "Why do you complain to Him that He answers none of man's words?" Elihu recognizes the Lord's sovereignty. The Almighty can do no wrong. He is always righteous. Because of this he does punish sin, and repays a man for the wrong he does. But, Elihu continues, don't try to understand God because at one time he will speak one way, then in another way, one that man will not understand. Then there "comes through" in the words of Elihu the idea of a mediator. "Yet if there

is an angel on his side, as a mediator, one out of a thousand, to tell a man what is right for him, to be gracious unto him." The approach of Elihu is different in many ways, from that of the other three men. He speaks of this mediator being gracious to Job and sparing him from going down into the pit. God's grace is beginning to "peek" through the clouds. Elihu further comes through in some "vague manner" with the concept of chastisement. Listen, "A man may be chastened upon his bed with constant distress in his bones. Also, God makes people listen to correction," he says. This of course is quite different from punishment. And then again, "But those who suffer he delivers in their suffering, he speaks to them in their affliction." He says to Job that God is wooing him from the jaws of distress, to a spacious place free from restriction.

From all these words we may conclude that Elihu teaches that God does punish sin. But with Christians this takes on some form of chastisement. And it appears that he thinks that all chastisement is the result of sin, but he does not accuse Job of particular great sins, like the other three friends did. Job is chastised for his sins in general. How clear the whole concept of chastisement was for them, living in the age of Old Testament revelation, we do not know. But there is progress as they struggle with the question why Job suffers so intensely. The real and final answer the Lord Himself gives in the last few chapters of the book.

* * *

In the New Testament the concept of chastisement takes on a much clearer meaning. Which Christian, being acquainted at all with the Bible, does not think of Hebrews 12:5-7, 11. "My son, regard not lightly the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art reproved of him: For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth. And scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. It is for chastening that ye endure; God dealeth with you as with sons, for what son is there

whom his father chasteneth not? . . . All chastening seemeth for the present to be not joyous but grievous; yet afterward it yieldeth peaceable fruit unto them that have been exercised thereby."

Chastisement is quite different from punishment. The latter is retribution. Chastisement is rooted in love, often deep love, for improvement, betterment and spiritual growth. Remember also here that there is no searching of His understanding. His training programs of chastisement bear fruit for time and all of eternity.

Often God will use the same means for punishment or chastisement. Believers and unbelievers may, for example, both be afflicted with physical ailments, the same kind, in fact. But for the believer they should never be considered to be punishment, not even for some special sins when no special outstanding sins have been committed. O yes, there may be chastisement where special transgressions have been committed. Sin is never cheap, neither for unbelievers, nor for believers. Think of David. The results of his sins in connection with Bathsheba were grievous. The sword would not depart from his house, adultery and murder were later committed in his own family and his wives were raped by his enemies. But this does not mean that all chastisement is a result of some special sins. *Very emphatically, not.* That is one of the great lessons of the book of Job. This should be of great comfort for many tried Christians. To teach this great truth the Lord undoubtedly "picks out" one of the most godly men who ever lived. No one may ever say that Job was submitted to such indescribable suffering because of any special sins. With Job, as well as with many other pious children of God, the Divine purpose is to bring out beautiful faith into much fuller spiritual blossom. And that will be the answer to the devil and silence him forever. Never forget that the suffering of Christians living in faith is a part of the heavenly program, out of love, for their good and the glory of God.

* *

But the Lord also understands human nature. Therefore he warns us not to become discouraged, or as we find it in another version, not to lose heart. And how much we need this encouragement! Especially when the affliction is heavy and prolonged.

We are encouraged to endure and accept this hardship as a discipline, a teaching of the heavenly Father. The Scriptures employ many different words to describe this kind of Christian action. It speaks of accepting the ways of the Lord, of yielding, enduring, surrendering, being resigned, acceding to God's ways. All by the grace of God of course through a lot of Bible reading and prayer. *The Lord wants complete and total submission.* These words are some of the "biggest" words in the vocabulary of the experience of the saints. This kind of action, we ultimately find with Job. James speaks of his patience, meaning that he endured, he didn't give up in his struggle, even though he often descended into deep valleys. Finally we find with him

the endurance and acceptance, which the Lord subsequently abundantly blessed.

The result of such Christian exercises, says the writer to the Hebrews, is the peaceable fruit of righteousness. Walking in the way of righteousness here means walking in the fear of the Lord, which, in these circumstances, means accepting and enduring and waiting with much grace and prayer. Doing this, says the author, we receive wonderful peace of mind and calmness of soul. The Holy Spirit gives it. Who has not seen Christians in wheel-chairs, on sick-beds, in other forms of affliction displaying an accepting faith, with peace that no one can understand, except that we know it is a gift of God? Such people have reached sublime spiritual heights in their chastisement. That kind of people understand something of what James speaks about when he says, "Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds." Here we see mighty victories of faith, silencing the devil, glorifying God. ●

TALENTS

*Have you ever read the story
Jesus told so long ago
Of the talents that were given
And were made to grow and
grow?
How the Master on a journey
Left His servants many days,
And again upon returning
Only two received His praise?*

*For the servant with the many
He had worked and gathered
more;
And the one with lesser talents
Also had a greater store.
But the last, his talent buried,
For he had received but one
And afraid that he would lose it
He heard not the words, "Well
done."*

*Our Master's on a journey
He has given talents too;
Are we working for the Master
When there is so much to do?
Can we see our talents growing
Be they many, few or one?
When our Master too returneth,
Will we hear the words, "Well
done?"*

Annetta Jansen
Dorr, Michigan

Letter to the Ephesians

Henry Vander Kam

SALVATION IS OF THE LORD.

Lesson 3

Ephesians 2:1-10

Surely, anyone who lays claim to the name "Christian" would agree with the statement that salvation is of the Lord. That is, he would agree to this statement theoretically. However, practically, many Christians still believe that the Lord has made salvation possible and that they now also have an important role to play in order to receive this salvation.

By Nature Dead

In Ephesians 2 it is made crystal clear that man does nothing in the obtaining of his salvation. "*You were dead!*" A dead person does not turn, he doesn't believe, he does nothing! This is perhaps the clearest and strongest statement found in the Bible to teach us that man is indeed totally depraved. This is a doctrine which men do not wish to accept. The passage under consideration here leaves no room for doubt that if salvation — from beginning to end — does not come from the Lord, there will be none.

The deadness of which the writer speaks is a spiritual death. They were dead through their trespasses and sins. This does not refer to the physical nature in the first place, but to the fact that in his relationship to God, man died when he fell into sin. So are we also, able to understand the words uttered by God in the Garden of Eden — in the day thou dost eat of this fruit thou shalt surely die. He did! Man by nature is not able to respond to the voice of God. This is such an important truth that it must be clearly understood by everyone. The Heidelberg Catechism asks which things are necessary for us to know for salvation and it answers that we must first know how great our sin and misery is. If one doesn't know *that*, no other knowledge will be of

any value. Paul leaves no room for doubt. How great is man's sin and misery? It killed him spiritually!

The translators seem to have a great difficulty with this statement of Paul. The ASV, for example, even begins with the words: "and you did he make alive." The words "did he make alive" are written in italics which means that these words were not found in the original. The addition of these words seems to be an attempt to give an answer to the questions which might be raised by those reading this epistle. Paul indeed gives this answer to the deepest questions which can be raised regarding man's total inability; but he doesn't give the answer until verse five because he has more to say about this total depravity. His answer is then so much richer than the answer of those who were running ahead of the Apostle.

A "Dead" Life

It must again be emphasized that the Apostle is speaking concerning their former *spiritual* death, because he now speaks of the fact that they "walked according to the course of this world." It was possible for these who were dead to walk! But, only according to the course of this world, which lies in the midst of death. They enjoyed themselves in that environment. It was in keeping with their whole outlook. They lived in that sin. They were obedient to the prince of the powers of the air. The writer means the prince of darkness. He inhabits this world and the atmosphere surrounding it. His is a mighty power — though not supreme. But, these people felt at home in this world of sin and were satisfied to follow the evil one wherever he would lead them. If you want to know what that was like, says Paul, then look at the lives of those around you who hate God and have sold themselves to Satan. That is the kind of a life you formerly lived! He calls them "sons

of disobedience." To obey anyone above them is totally foreign to them. They are the offspring of disobedience!

But, one must not conclude that the state of sin in which they had been was any different from the state of sin of others. No, *we all* once lived that kind of life. He includes himself among such sinners. All boasting is excluded! By nature all once "lived in the lusts of the flesh, doing the desires of the flesh and mind" — of course! Why would anyone who is spiritually dead live any other way? But, remember, we were then the children of wrath even as all those who know not the Lord.

Made Alive With Christ

Although Paul pictures the desperate condition of natural man most clearly, he also shows the beauty of salvation as clearly as it can be put in human language. Man was dead by nature and could therefore do nothing to relieve his condition — but God entered into his condition. The mercy of God is revealed. The love of God (to those who were children of wrath) rescued those who were dead. He did not love them because they were so good and so obedient but He loved them while they were dead! How can a person believe in a salvation and not believe in election! He chose those who were dead! He made us alive together with Christ! That's the answer to the mystery of the passage. Following the original order we see the riches of salvation so much more clearly than if we run ahead of the writer and say already in the first verse of this chapter "and you did he make alive." Don't try to improve on the language and thought of the Scriptures!

The parenthetical statement which we find at the close of verse five is indeed significant. "By grace ye are saved." This ought to be clear to everyone, that it is the grace of God and that grace alone which saves us. Salvation is indeed of the Lord. He lifted us up while we were dead and gave us life in Christ, Who is the only source of life. He then raised us up with Him and even made us to sit in the heavenly places with Him. From death to life; from poverty to riches; from the lowliest station to the highest! Christians suffered with Him, they will also be glorified in Him; they died with Him, they will also be raised to life in Him.

A Progressing Discovery

Verse seven almost seems to be somewhat out of tune with that which has gone before and therefore there are also many fanciful interpretations of this verse. However, Paul is very logical in this statement. All of that which is given us in our salvation, or all that is given to us in Christ, is not immediately evident. Every day of our lives unfolds more of the riches which have been given us in Him. That is all that he means by the ages to come. It is in all future time — both now and in eternity that the fullness of our salvation will be unfolded. That grace is so great that the Apostle as it were coins another word ("the exceeding riches of his grace") in order to make plain to the church what wealth she has received.

God's Gift of Faith

In verse eight we have perhaps one of the most beautiful summaries of the Christian faith and also the most comprehensive. Once more Paul repeats the fact that Christians have been saved by grace. Salvation was effected through faith. Now, is not that faith our contribution toward that salvation? He gives immediate reply: "and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." Saved by grace? Indeed. Wrought by faith? Indeed. But, even that faith which God's people exercise is His gift! Salvation is indeed of the Lord and we do not add one iota to it. This is the emphasis of this whole passage and is of the greatest importance for understanding the nature, not only of salvation, but later in this same epistle, also the nature of the church. In our own circles we often read of "accepting Christ," "deciding for Christ" etc. Is this bad? We know what is meant. We must speak the language of Scripture! No one who is dead "accepts" Christ or "decides" for Him. When we use the language which is common in the evangelical world, but is contrary to the language of Scripture, we minimize the grace of God. The exceeding riches of His grace must always be celebrated.

Not Saved By Good Works

To make it clear that all the emphasis must rest on the grace of God and salvation as a free gift, he adds the words: "not of works that no man should glory." The Jews were always tempted to seek their eternal welfare, not entirely, but, nevertheless in part, in their good works. Then a man has something in which he can glory. He has accomplished something. Paul is not writing primarily to the Jews in this epistle but to those who have come out of the gentile world. But, this makes no difference. It is not only a characteristic of the Jew to embrace good works which he has done — it is the difficulty with which every human being strives. It takes a great deal of grace to live on grace! Jesus struck at the very heart of this matter when he told His followers that they would have to deny themselves and so follow Him. The self is the last person we want to deny. The gospel of Jesus Christ has made us fabulously rich but it has robbed us of all self-glorying. Yet, what would be man's own glorying? What does he possess whereof he may glory? The only thing he can claim as his own is his sin! Let those who glory, glory in the Lord Who has raised them from death to life and will give them so much in the time to come that it is beyond their ability to imagine.

Saved For Good Works

No sooner has the Apostle warned the readers against basing their hope for salvation on their works, than he begins to speak of the good works which the believer must do. In fact, those who have tasted of the redeeming grace of God are His workmanship. There is nothing in them which they owe to anyone but Him. He made them what they are. Now, in Christ Jesus He has created this workmanship for a purpose and the purpose is good works. In

the churches of the Reformation there was some hesitancy to do justice to the Scriptural teaching concerning good works. They had seen the evil of an emphasis on such works becoming a misinterpretation of salvation as man's doing. But, although the doctrine is fraught with all manner of difficulty, it may not be ignored because it is the clear teaching of Scripture that good works are to be done. That's what God saved them *for*. God even prepared these works so that we should walk in them. The life of good works is therefore to be the climate of the redeemed life. Now, how does this differ from the works which Paul warned against in the previous verse? There the works were considered as those which might aid in the salvation of the individuals performing them. That, says Paul, is out of the question. Salvation is by grace alone. However, that redeemed life will bear a certain stamp and will be different from the unredeemed. The different life is what God redeemed us for. The mode of life must now correspond to His will, out of gratitude for the salvation which has been received. If life be viewed as a tree, the natural man wants to place his own works among the roots of that tree. The Scriptures teach that the good works of believers are found in the *fruit* of such a tree. Believers must bring forth fruit. That which is fruitless, barren, is good for nothing but is removed from its place. So important are these good works, that we are to walk in them, and that it may even be said that there is no salvation apart from them.

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3. God chose His people and gave them life even while they were dead in trespasses and sins. He also speaks of "children of wrath." Who are they? Is it proper to say to everyone "God loves you"?
4. Why do the Scriptures call us to faith and obedience, seeing these things are the gift of God? Why does the Bible call me to repent when only He can make me repent?
5. Why is the whole matter of good works a "touchy" question? Can you understand why the Heidelberg Catechism brings up the subject three times?

JEW AND GENTILE BROUGHT TOGETHER.

Lesson 4

Ephesians 2:11-17

Jewish Privileges

One of the greatest problems confronting the New Testament church was: How can gentiles also be admitted to the church of Jesus Christ? Surely, you cannot negate thousands of years of history and all the gifts which had been bestowed on one people (the Jews) and say that we now start on an equal footing! Does it mean nothing that the Jews were the beloved of God? Does it mean nothing that the Jews have served the true God for thousands of years? Does it mean nothing that the promises had been given to the Jews? Does it mean nothing that God had given His laws only to this people?

When one considers the above questions he realizes that it was nothing short of revolutionary to bring the gospel of Jesus Christ to the gentiles. The Jews had been brought up to recognize the gentiles as "dogs." The covenant had been given to the Jews, and to the Jews only, and its sign was circumcision. The gentiles were therefore commonly referred to as the uncircumcised. That made it clear enough to everyone that they were different people with whom the Jews would have nothing to do. Woes had been pronounced on those who would marry outside of the people of God. Jews were not even permitted to eat with gentiles. They were the unclean. And now God says "How dare you call common what I have made clean!" This naturally raised difficult questions for the sincere Jew. Something had already been done before Ephesians was written to make clear that a new era had dawned. The Synod of Jerusalem had been held and "officially" the relationship between Jew and gentile Christians had been established. But, this decision spoke of some ethical principles: the gentiles should not eat of things sacrificed to idols; they should not eat of the flesh with the blood; they should not eat that which had been strangled; and they should (of course)

abstain from fornication. Is that all that is now required in this New Testament time? What about circumcision? What about the rules and regulations concerning diet? Has everything now become *easy*? Let non-discrimination be an official position — practice will dictate something else! Even the Apostle Peter found it difficult to *swallow* this view and was criticized severely by Paul (Gal. 2:11ff.).

Paul does give us a little insight into the hypocrisy of the Jews concerning their relation to the gentiles when he speaks of a "circumcision made by hands." Of course, this was the only circumcision which existed, but, his emphasis on the fact that it was made by hands shows us that with many it was only an external rite. Then the circumcision, of course, was meaningless and was not a sign (a true sign) of the covenant of grace. It must be borne in mind that all that which was circumcised was not automatically the true people of God.

Gentile Privations

But, let it also be clear that something great had to happen to these gentiles before they could be accounted to belong to God's people. When the Jews had accused them of being uncircumcised, they had been far removed from God. They were without Christ, and there is no salvation apart from Him. They had been a people which was wretched. The Jew had looked for a Savior to come, while the gentiles didn't even recognize their need of a Savior.

They had also been "alienated from the commonwealth of Israel." Of course — they had their own state and their own government. Was this a serious lack on their part that they did not belong to the commonwealth of Israel? Yes it was. Israelites had a Theocracy — God was their Ruler. He had given them His laws so that the Apostle can say at another occasion: What nation has such laws as Israel? Israel was highly privileged to have this kind of government. The gentiles were aliens to all of this. Their own governments were usually corrupt and ruled for themselves.

They had also been "strangers from the covenants of the promise." If there was one outstanding element in the relationship of God to His chosen people, it was the fact that he had made His covenant with them. In this covenant He had promised to be their God. What that meant in all its depth was not fully known until Christ came. But, it was a covenant of friendship which He had made with His people. That the plural, "covenants," is used seems to indicate only that the same covenant was reiterated time and again throughout the Old Testament history. This covenant is not between equals nor is it an agreement in which both parties have the same importance. Man must accept it by faith, but God makes the covenant. How richly Israel had been blessed through this relationship, and the gentiles were simply strangers to this relationship.

Being strangers to God's covenant, they were, of course, without hope in this life. If He is not their God and they are not His people, there is no hope! What a hopeless world the gospel came into. Idolatry brings fear — but no hope!

Paul concludes this list of the things which the gentiles lacked by stating that they were "without God in the world." The gentiles had their own gods and thereby they tried to satisfy their basic need. But they failed. These idols were not able to instill any hope and gave no comfort to those who worshipped them. The true God had made them and had also given them many things. But, they did not have the knowledge of the true God nor of the way of salvation.

From all of this it becomes evident that the plight of the gentiles was a desperate one. They had nothing. Are these now to be placed on the same plane with the Jews who have been so highly favored? Isn't the salvation brought by Christ the natural property of the Jews? How can these hated gentiles suddenly become their brothers?

Christ's Reconciliation

The miracle has occurred through the coming of Christ into this world and the work He has accomplished. That which seemed to be a total impossibility has become a fact. The gentiles were so far removed from God. Christ has drawn them close. The blood of Christ has accomplished wonders. Now the blood of Christ has first of all brought God and the sinner together. This is the salvation of which the Bible speaks. But, He has done far more by the sacrifice which He has brought. He has not only brought God and man together, He has also brought man and man together, and therefore also the Jew and the gentile. He is the One who has established peace where there was enmity. He has made both one! There had been a wall between them which nothing and nobody seemed to be able to break down. That hostility grew with the years. Christ broke down this wall. Here in Ephesus one can see the effect of the work of Christ. Jew and gentile are worshipping together and sit at the same table. The Bible knows of only one division — believer and unbeliever, no Jew and gentile or any other distinction. Christ broke down barriers and brought men together as well as reconciling them with their God.

How did Christ accomplish the deed of bringing Jew and gentile together? He "abolished in His flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances." What does this mean? The Apostle is not speaking of the moral law or the law of the ten commandments. Those will always stand and will have to be observed by both Jew and gentile. No, it is rather the ceremonial law which he has in mind. The Jew could not understand that those who had always been his enemies could now receive all the benefits of salvation in Christ. On the other hand, the gentile could not understand how circumcision would benefit him in his salvation. He could not understand how the failure to eat pork could help him in his salvation. This does not mean that this ceremonial law had never been of value. It had taught Israel much during the Old Testament times. It showed that God's people was a peculiar people. They were to be separated from all others. But, that time is past. Christ has in His flesh abolished this

ceremonial law. He has brought the great sacrifice and don't let anyone bring another sin offering! Israel had fallen into the error of placing the ceremonial law above the moral, and this had led it to a mere formal religion. This is done away. Let those who worship God worship in spirit and in truth, whether they be Jew or gentile.

In this way Christ has created "in Himself of the two one new man, so making peace." Only the sacrificial work of Christ was able to accomplish that which no one else had ever accomplished. Faith in Jesus Christ as the only Savior of men is the only requirement for both Jew and gentile. Therein they have become the same. Both Jew and gentile have received great riches through the Christ of God.

United in Christ's Church

So has Christ reconciled men to God and has formed that body called the church. The church of Jesus Christ is a marvel in this world. That is the only body in which old and young, rich and poor, and all races meet and call one another brethren. We must never lose sight of the fact that *the one holy catholic church is an article of faith!* Who could ever have imagined that such a body could come into existence after sin had entered the world? We see it but we don't understand it. The glory of that body, the church, is emphasized in Ephesians as nowhere else. How is it possible that people can speak so lightly of the church which is His body and believe that they have made a great improvement on the message of Scripture by always speaking of a personal Savior and a personal salvation. Of course these statements are true; but only in the light of the church, the body, the bride of Jesus Christ! He builds His church. He gives His life for His church. Many of the ills, spiritual ills, of the present day can be traced to a faulty conception of the church. When true and false church are no longer "easily distinguished" from each other, there is trouble. When it is emphasized that no church has all of the truth — one may conclude that there is no true church, and we then call on such vague concepts as an invisible church!

Christ has established peace through the work which He accomplished. This peace is now found between Jew and gentile. However, such a peace will never come unless they are both reconciled to God. The relationship to God must be right before there will ever be the possibility of a proper relationship between men. He Himself preached that peace. Never did anyone speak as He spoke. He came with the gospel — the good news. He preached it not to one group, but to all. He preached it to those who were nigh, who were close — the Jews. He also spoke it to those who were far off — the gentiles. This was the true gospel. This brought peace of heart and that only is the true peace. He restored hope. He gave meaning to life. He accomplished what the prophets of the Old Testament attempted — to turn the people from formalism to the true religion. Great peace have they who follow Him. He is our peace. He is the Prince of peace. He preached it and the church must preach that same message.

Questions for discussion:

1. Does the ceremonial law have anything to teach us today? How about Israel's civil law?
2. Why was there such hostility between Jew and gentile? Does that still exist? Is there any way of preventing another holocaust, such as that in the 1940s, except by means of the preaching of the Word?
3. Seeing faith in Jesus Christ is all that is necessary, is it very important to speak of the covenant and all the other things summed up by Paul in vs. 12? Is there the danger today that we ignore such things as the covenant and only emphasize the necessity of believing in Jesus?
4. We are indebted to the blood of Christ for our salvation. For anything else?
5. Why is the church an article of faith? Do we sufficiently emphasize the importance of being the true church and belonging to that church only?
6. What determines whether or not a church is the true church? ●

BLESSINGS

As many as sands on the seashore

As many as stars in the sky;

As many as waves on the ocean

So many blessings have I.

More precious than parents or children

More precious than silver or gold;

More precious than all earth's possessions

Is the wonderful faith I hold.

A strength always there for the asking

A peace earth cannot take away;

A joy that abideth forever

These blessings have all come my way.

As many as sands on the seashore

As many as stars in the sky;

As many as waves on the ocean

So many blessings have I.

*Annetta Jansen
Dorr, Michigan*

The Imprecatory Psalms

Jelle Tuininga

Of late there has been some renewed discussion about the imprecatory psalms, particularly as they relate to congregational singing. Some feel these psalms should not be sung by God's people today. Others maintain, rightly I believe, that they ought to remain part of the treasury of the singing congregation today.

In a more general sense, many Christians in the past and present have had and still have trouble with the so-called imprecatory psalms in the Bible (cf. e.g. Pss. 35, 58, 137, 139, etc.). In a way that is understandable, for the tenor of these psalms appears to conflict with the biblical teaching that we must love our enemies (cf. e.g. Matth. 5:38-48). How does one harmonize these seemingly contradictory emphases?

It is not my intention to discuss the subject at length, but only to point out what I view to be wrong solutions to the problem, and then suggest what I consider to be a better direction.

Wrong "Solutions"

I came across one such "solution" the other day, one that I had heard many times before. In discussing Art. 36 of the Belgic Confession, Dr. C. Plantinga, in his *A Place To Stand*, says that the wording of Art. 36 "is neither charitable nor accurate." Agreed. Then he says: "We know from the teaching of our Lord (that) detesting other persons — even enemies — is gross sin. We may hate what people do or say. But we may not hate any people" (p. 123). Now I grant that we may not hate or detest other Christians, in this case the Anabaptists. No quarrel

there. But the statement as a whole is misleading, not to say wrong. I don't believe our Lord contradicts the psalms of David, and David said he hated "those that hate Thee," in other words, *persons* who were enemies of the *Lord*, and by virtue of that fact, also *his* enemies. Therefore, the "solution" "hate the sin but love the sinner" doesn't hold water, and is, to my way of thinking, *not* the solution to the problem. Sin can never be separated from the sinner perpetrating it. Sin is personified, so to say.

A somewhat less popular "solution," especially in Reformed circles, is to say that David, in uttering these sentiments, was not speaking the Word of God, but only venting his own sinful thoughts. But this "solution" is in conflict with the Bible's own view of inspiration. The Psalms, though written by sinful men, are nevertheless the authoritative words of God. They are not just subjective utterances of some saints, but a *normative* response for God's people also today.

A third "solution" has been to say that these psalms were Old Testament in character, but that the New Testament supersedes this teaching, and that only the New Testament is now normative in this respect. This idea is also a completely wrong "solution." Not only does it fail to see the *unity* of the Scriptures in making such an unwarranted distinction between Old and New Testament, but it also overlooks the fact that the New Testament has similar injunctions for believers. Revelation 18:6, 7 is a very close parallel to Psalm 137; in verse 20 of that same chapter the saints are explicitly told to rejoice over the destruction of Babylon. Moreover, in Rev. 6:10 the martyred saints pray for God to manifest his justice on their enemies. The reader should also refer to passages such as Acts 13:10, 11; Gal. 1:8, 9; Phil. 3:18, 19. Thus our problems are not only with the Psalms and not only with the Old Testament.

Rev. Jelle Tuininga is the pastor of the First Christian Reformed Church of Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada.

Toward a Solution

I believe the solution lies in patterning our love and hate after God's love and hate. God is love (I John 4:8), but He hates all evildoers (Ps. 5:5; 11:5; Rom. 9:13; Hosea 9:15). He makes his sun shine on the just and the unjust, but at the same time his wrath remains on those who do not repent (John 3:36). In other words, God is a *jealous* God. His wrath is the reverse side of his love; it is a result of love being spurned. We may not drive a wedge between God's love and his hate.

In a somewhat similar way we must both love and hate. We must not see these as opposites, but as necessary components. One cannot really love unless he can also hate. God is jealous of his covenantal love. Covenantal love spurned means covenantal wrath. And as God's people we are called upon to be God's image-bearers in this respect too. We hate our enemies because they are *God's* enemies. God's cause is our cause. We have staked our lives on that cause; we are jealous for the honor of God's name. And when we see that Name spurned and rejected, when we see enemies opposing the kingdom of God, then we can't help uttering the words of David in Ps. 139. That then becomes a righteous prayer, much like the prayer of the saints under the altar (Rev. 6). Then something of God's holy jealousy fills our breasts too. And then love and hate are intertwined. Says C. Vander Waal:

In the Scriptures God is not presented as "our sweet God" (onze lieve Heer), but as the God of the covenant. And then you know that in His firm covenant he comes not only with His covenant *promise*, but also with His *wrath*. . . .

In the Bible we are instructed not to have *personal* hate: avenge not yourselves, beloved! It does not concern our right and it is not against our personal enemies, but it concerns the right of the Lord, the God of the covenant, and it is against His enemies! "The enemies of the Son must also be your enemies."

(*Sola Scriptura*, II, pp. 55, 58)

I conclude with a couple of quotations from Dr. K.J. Popma in his *Levensbeschouwing*:

We need the imprecatory psalms like we need bread. . . . Exegetically one can perpetrate no greater folly than when one explains a princely song like Ps. 35 as an expression of Oriental hot-headedness: he who cannot pray along with this Psalm has not yet understood anything of the gospel.

(Vol. V, p. 23)

A sweetened (versuikerd) humanism which deems itself elevated above this hate, and what is more, is brutal enough to still call itself the Christian faith, knows nothing of these things. . . .

Christian wrath, but also Christian hate, are an indispensable component in life and at times serve clearly as the salt of the earth. . . . If there is no Christian hate living in the Christian heart anymore, then our fallible judgment

must declare that in that heart there is no Christian faith anymore either.

(Vol. II, pp. 395-6)

I think Popma is right. We need more vibrant Christianity today. If we can no longer get angry at sin and sinners, and hate those who perpetrate evil against God and his people, then we have to ask whether the flame of God's love is still burning brightly in our hearts.

Is it dangerous to talk this way? Indeed, for hate so easily turns into something ugly, so easily becomes *personal* hate for *personal* enemies. And that is wrong. Remember David speaks of those who hate *the Lord*, but who for that reason have also become his enemies. We must not turn that around. Maybe David himself realized how easily God's people are tempted to have the wrong kind of hate. Perhaps that's why he prayed the prayer found at the end of the Psalm: "Search me O God and know my heart!" That must be our prayer too. No doubt the psalmist felt the danger of the imprecatory utterances also. But that did not keep the Holy Spirit from including them in his Word. And neither must it keep us from exercising a godly hate. Here too we must not be wiser than God.

As a kind of postscript, for an apt, concrete and modern-day illustration of the difference between a sweet, sentimental Christianity and a vibrant Calvinism, compare Corrie Ten Boom's *The Hiding Place* with Anne De Vries' *Journey Through The Night*. How refreshing and Calvinistic the latter is!

In *The Banner* of June 22nd, you find a good example of an approach to the imprecatory psalms (and actually to the Scriptures as such) to which I refer, an approach which is disallowed by Scripture itself. The Rev. Michael De Vries, in his meditation on the last verses of Psalm 139, writes:

. . . this outburst is also *appalling* to me. In his zeal to be a loyal follower of God, this psalmist became, however temporarily, a religious fanatic. He is ready to slay the wicked. He wants to call down fire from heaven on anyone who is less religious than he is. He seems to know with accuracy who the wicked are and what they deserve.

A bit later: "The psalmist seems to have become aware that there was something radically wrong with his hostility."

Now I submit that this is a total misunderstanding of what the Psalmist is really saying, and actually calls into question the fact that the Psalmist is here speaking under the guidance and inspiration of the Holy Spirit. He is not just venting his own feelings; he is not calling God's curse on those who are less religious than he. No, he is identifying himself completely with God and His cause, and in a sense we might say that he is identifying himself with the Lord Jesus who said, "Zeal for your house has eaten me up," and who drove out the money-changers with a whip.

This is not an isolated incident in the Psalms or in the entire Scriptures. One finds it again and again. What would De Vries do with Ps. 10:12ff, 43:1,

69:22-28, 137 etc.? More examples of "religious fanaticism"? But Psalm 69 is applied to Christ in the New Testament, and Paul applies part of it to the Jews who would not hear the gospel (Rom. 11:9, 10). Peter applies v. 26 of the same Psalm to Judas (Acts 1:20). Were the New Testament writers mistaken too? Didn't they understand that this "fanatic" Psalmist was mistaken in using these words? No, they didn't, for the Psalmist was not mistaken, but De Vries is mistaken in his views of the Psalmist.

I conclude with quotations from three commentators on this Psalm:

He hates the enemies of the Lord, and whatever their personal stand over against him might be, he will nevertheless hold them as his personal enemies because they are enemies of his God. Their relationship over-against God shall be for him the only standard for his relationship to them.

(Dr. A. Noordtzij in *Korte Verklaring*)

He shall hate those who hate the Lord, that is, he shall oppose them. He shall further the coming of the kingdom of God, be an enemy of all those who put themselves in the service of Satan.

(Dr. F.W. Grosheide in *De Psalmen*)

The poet remains, notwithstanding his zeal for God's house, below that which the New Testament asks of us, so it is often stated. Indeed, so speaks our *feeling*. But at the same time, this judgment is not according to the Scriptures. . . . Thus, when Ps. 139:23, 24 prays: "Search me, O God, . . . see if there is any wicked way in me," then we must not dissociate this "edifying" prayer from that "hating" in the previous verse. The church, which does not covenantally (*verbondsmatig*) dare to "hate" that which her King hates, is on a *disastrous* course (*heillose weg*).

(Dr. C. Van Der Waal in *Sola Scriptura*) ●

A BORED DENOMINATION

Norman B. Haan

Hi! My name is Aver Age Churchman. I am a member of the Christian Reformed denomination.

I went to church twice last Sunday. I must confess that I was rather bored. I do not know what it was, but it bothers me. Come to think of it, I have been bored for some time now. I wonder what it is!

It is probably the order of worship. It has not been changed for awhile. We have sung these doxologies for two years or more. There is never any variation. You always know what is coming next. That prayer of confession has no meaning anymore — just words. But, come to think of it, I was bored with the previous order of worship also, and when they changed it to our present one, that did not really help either.

If the problem causing my boredom is not the order of worship, then it must be the pastor. He has

been here over seven years. I almost know what he is going to say on a given subject before he says it. Maybe if he would vary his voice a little more, or walk around on the pulpit area, it would keep my attention. He has a call right now. Maybe he will take it, and we can get a new minister. That will liven things up here a bit. But, I have to be honest. I thought church attendance would be more fun when our last minister left. It was good to see a new face and hear a new voice, and I was excited for awhile, but then that controversy arose over local evangelism, and I sort of cooled off again. Actually, our minister is a really dedicated person, good personality, does a lot for this church. Maybe my boredom is found somewhere else.

I think I should leave the denomination. There is that Congregational Church in town. There is a church that is really on fire! They have a great missionary program. They are interested in young people, and they witness to their neighbors. That young minister presents a pretty powerful sermon.

Rev. Norman B. Haan is the pastor of the First Christian Reformed Church of Waupun, Wisconsin.

Of course, there is also that Baptist Church in town. That is good too. They have a great educational program — something for everybody. They even have a gym for their young people; and they have four ministers in that church. What a tremendous choir! I also like it when they have a professional football player give his testimony. I wish I could be a Christian like that. On second thought, my friend Jim goes to that Baptist Church, and he is unhappy there. It is just too big and you are just another face. Bill, at work, goes to the Congregational Church and he is unhappy there. They are a little too liberal. Must be those churches have problems too. There is perhaps no perfect church. Maybe I ought to go to that more conservative church where they have no problem with women seeking to be elders and deacons, and where every minister uses the right hermeneutics. Well, maybe that is not the answer either.

Do you know what I am doing? I am bored about my church, and I am blaming everyone else and everything else. How dumb! The problem is not these other people or things, but the problem is me. I ought to look at myself for a minute or two.

I go to church the same way I go to a ball game, or the same way I watch TV. I am a spectator. If I like the action, I applaud; if I do not like it, I boo. If the TV program entertains me, I watch it, else I turn to something else. I have become a church spectator looking for someone to entertain me, and if they do not, I become bored. My training from youth up has

been to attend church, and so I continue to attend, but I am usually bored because the entertainment or performance is not good enough.

I think I remember that the Bible does not present the church in terms of a theatre or a football game. The church is a body in which each member does his or her part; or it is a vine with branches each bearing fruit; or it is a building with each brick doing its part to hold it up and keep it strong; or a marriage with each party exercising his or her responsibilities to each other so love remains and grows. Where did I ever get the idea that the church was a spectator event?

Another thing comes to mind. The Bible speaks about truth which forms the basis for a good Christian life in righteousness and holiness. I have not really been paying much attention to what the minister has been teaching from the Bible the past years either, but mostly to how he delivers his message. That must be why my Christian life is not what it ought to be, and maybe that is why I am not serving the Lord with my gifts, and failing to witness for Him.

I think next Sunday when I go to the two worship services, I will enter into the spirit of worship, and I will seek to learn and apply what the minister teaches. It might even be a good idea to prepare myself already on Saturday evening. Yes, maybe if I, Aver Age Churchman, would change, my whole denomination would become more alive and more powerful for Christ. ●

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Reasons for a New Seminary

Jelle Tuininga

Judging by his comments in a recent issue, *The Banner* editor appears not to know the reasons behind the proposed establishment of an alternate seminary. Though I'm not directly involved in this venture, I am nevertheless sympathetic to it, and I'd like to tell Kuyvenhoven the reasons for my sympathy.

Kuyvenhoven's editorial colleague, the Rev. Ha- verkamp, mentions a few things in *De Wachter* of June 9: Prof. Hugen's farcical use of the Scriptures in defending the candidacy of Marchienne Rienstra, and Prof. De Ridder's advice to the effect that those churches who had installed women could continue to do so even after synod had declared a moratorium on this practice. To this could be added the participation of Pres. Kromminga in the laying on of hands in the ordination service of Mrs. Rienstra in a denomination other than our own. One doesn't have to wonder why most of the candidates today are in favor of women in ecclesiastical office. It's not necessary to teach this overtly: actions speak louder than words.

Then there is the Verhey matter, and the sympathy of some Seminary professors for his views. And now at the recently held synod Pres. Kromminga and Prof. Stek openly defended the candidacy of Clayton Libolt, even though the latter held views on Genesis which clearly contradicted our creeds. And this not on minor matters, but on very fundamental matters of the faith. One would expect, and has a right to expect, that the entire faculty of Calvin Seminary would protest the candidacy of someone who holds such views, but as it is only one Professor protested, while two others openly defended the man. Every church member has a right to ask what is going on here. And though "de kerkelijke

weg" (the ecclesiastical way of protest) is always open, it sometimes leads to a dead-end, witness the fact that the Board of Trustees decided to recommend this candidate by a vote of 42 to 7, if I am correctly informed. If that is not a rubber-stamp mentality then I wonder what is.

I could also mention the presence of a great deal of poor preaching in the churches, and the concern of many church members and consistories about this. Many consistories are very hesitant and careful about calling ministers. Surely that says something about the minister's training. Then there is the presence of a great deal of sickening compromise within the church, so that we hesitate to speak clearly about anything; witness the myriad study reports of the last number of years. Along with this there is too much speculative theology at work in the seminary and in the church as a whole, which wreaks havoc with the church in the name of scholarship, and starves God's people from hearing the rich and nourishing Word of God. Here De Koster is right: we learn to understand the Scriptures only in the way of *obedience*, not by placing ourselves over them. The seminary professors should approach the Scriptures far more in a childlike attitude of reverence and obedience, saying with Samuel: "Speak, Lord, for your servant hears," rather than approaching the Bible as a book containing a host of "problems" which we are going to try to solve. In this connection I remember with devotion and delight the devout and humble scholar of the Lord, the late Prof. John Murray of Westminster Seminary. A professor with such an attitude toward the Scriptures, such absolute trust in God's Word, produces students with similar qualities. And that is what we sorely need today: ministers who bow unconditionally before the sovereign Word of the living God. If Calvin Seminary is not producing such men, perhaps another seminary can. That's what I'm hoping for. And that's what the church too is hoping for, and needs. ●

Rev. Jelle Tuininga is the pastor of the First Christian Reformed Church of Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada.

How the Church Helps Tear Down Morality

Aiken Taylor

One reason why President Reagan's handling of the air traffic controllers' strike seemed so unreal to so many (including many of the controllers themselves who simply could not believe it) was that the President appealed to America's former respect for law instead of the situational ethics which has dominated the thinking of Americans for the past 15 years.

To explain what we mean by *that*, we go back to an editorial written some 12 years ago on the (then) virulent impact of situational ethics openly taught by the churches. We wrote:

"Most thoughtful people, both Christians and non-Christians, realize that America, as 'a society ruled by law,' is under massive attack.

"Our processes of justice have become mockeries, our courts have become havens for criminals, our laws have been written only to be broken.

"What most people do *not* realize is that the religious community has participated in the attack upon law through formal theological sanctions that have received the widest possible acceptance.

"The church has attacked law by teaching 'situational ethics' as a replacement for fixed rules of behavior. And it is no accident that the 'new morality' began to receive wide publicity just at the time that the laws of society as a whole came under attack.

"Commenting on the influence of situational ethics (the 'flexible' approach to rules and regulations taught in such texts as the current CLC book, *In Response to God*), Prof. John G. Milhaven of Woodstock (Md.) College described the year 2000 as he foresaw it:

"The traditional moral theology that solved cases of conscience through application of law will no longer be in demand... Moral principles will

still be recognized but not as solely decisive factors... The principle of 'responsibility' will be more emphasized than that of an 'obligation' binding through law.'

"Prof. Milhaven was talking of the church, of course. But it is precisely because the church is (and has been) contributing a moral respectability to the idea that laws exist only to be broken (if there's a good reason, of course) that the entire concept of a society governed by law is beginning to crumble.

"After all, if the church says 'Thou shalt not commit adultery' is not necessarily the final word on the subject in every circumstance, it will not be long before a civil court says 'Commit rape and you go to jail' is not necessarily the final word on the subject in every circumstance.

"The judge who sits in church on Sunday and hears that fixed principles must yield to a decision concerning 'the loving thing to do,' may well go back to his court on Monday and decide that the rioter who killed a policeman while demonstrating should get a suspended sentence.

"And so in another area the church makes a major contribution to the disintegration of society."

What President Reagan has done has been to restore an important value that — with the church's help — was beginning to disappear. ●

This editorial by the editor, Dr. Aiken Taylor, appeared in the August 26, 1981 issue of The Presbyterian Journal, published at Asheville, N.C., and is reprinted by permission.

Editor's note: It is highly significant that the scriptures characterize the coming Anti-Christ as "the lawless one" (2 Thess. 2:8). When the churches waver in their loyalty to the Lord and His Word, we may be disconcerted but should not be surprised to find them duped into serving the cause of Anti-Christ in society. 2 Thess. 2:11 even intimates that this development is a Divine judgment.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Unpardonable Sin (February Issue)

Richard Venema's article "The Unpardonable Sin" was uncommonly good. It was clear and easily understood. It was to the point and logical. It was well written and Biblical. After reading the article, the reader has a good grasp of a problem. Well done.

An informed reader,
Glenn Palmer
8145 Lion Ave.
Norfolk, VA 23518

Discrimination in Reading

Dear Editor:

I too share Dr. Gerda Bos' concern that English teachers should not provoke needless conflict in a Christian school community by assigning students reading material which offends the supporting community of the school the teacher serves ("Discrimination in Reading" *Outlook*, Jan. 1981). Dr. Bos' article, however, adds fuel to a very dangerous fire, for it misrepresents the real problems English teachers face in choosing reading material for their teaching.

First of all, while the article implies that English teachers should have no difficulty in finding inoffensive material to meet all of their educational objectives, that is, in fact, not true. Certain objectives, such as — in our own case — the illustrating of our national literary tradition, almost force the Canadian English teacher to choose between a number of so-called offensive alternatives. That the British Columbia Ministry of Education Committee on Controversial Issues has sat for two years on the choice of a Canadian novel for English II, and to my knowledge has not yet reached a decision, should illustrate the problem. When an authority, such as Dr. Bos, suggests that there is no need for such struggle because all offensive literature may be easily avoided, she encourages parents to suspect teachers who may be honest enough in their attempt to be true both to the educational goals they must meet and the trust of their community. Such teachers' difficulties are severe enough. They do not need outside authorities to cast doubt on their professional integrity.

Secondly, the article implies at several points that those teachers who might have caused offense in school communities are

either mistaken about their job or lazy. They are mistaken because English teachers are not to teach social problems, politics or abnormal psychology. They are lazy because they do not devote themselves to grammar and composition and because they choose to teach the sensational and topical literature of the present rather than do the work to enable students to enjoy the sterner demands of the literature of the past.

Now, I know many English teachers. With many of them, I do not agree. I think that many of them are moving in counter-productive directions, and I'm sure many of them feel the same about me. Still, there is not a one of them of whom the article's implied picture of the offense-causing English teacher is in any measure correct. It appears to me that Dr. Bos is applying an image she has of the *Catcher in the Rye* fiascoes of the late sixties and early seventies to the very different climate of 1981. Those English teachers I know who might ever find themselves in a controversy, however small, are hard-working, are as concerned with writing as with literature, and are dedicated to high standards of literary taste. It is, in fact, those whose demands are low and whose taste is compromised by a willingness to accept the sensational and frivolous found even in the school textbooks of recent years who also seldom seem to stir controversy of this nature.

When this issue surfaces in any discussion, parents tend to point fingers at teachers and teachers tend to point fingers at parents. Such bickering is of little value. The article *The Outlook* should have printed in this issue would have called both parents and teachers to talking and in their talking to respecting each the integrity and sincerity of the other. The Christian community should be a community of healing. I challenge *The Outlook* to print an article on the same topic by an author aware of the intricacies of the issue and one whose first desire is just such building of the body of Christ.

Sincerely,
Lloyd Den Boer
8250 - 13th Ave.
Burnaby, B.C.

Time for Catechism (September Issue)

Dear Rev. DeJong:

I have often agreed with your assessment of certain doctrinal matters (the need for a strict view of propositional truth, for example). My agreement stems from the fact that I, too, mean by my writing and teaching to put forth and defend our solidly confessional Reformed faith. I was therefore surprised and heartily displeased to note the treatment *Beyond Doubt* receives at your hands in the September *Outlook*. Let me make three comments.

First, you criticize my quoting from the United Presbyterian *Confession of 1967*. Do you think that any of the quoted items is false or contrary to Scripture? I do not. And I suspect from your silence about any specific statements that you do not either.

No doubt you really want to object to the practice of quoting from *C '67* at all — even

if the quoted statements are true. You think, perhaps, that this practice implies a general acceptance of a confession that is too liberal.

But you yourself quote at length from T.S. Eliot in the same issue of *Outlook*. Does this mean that you accept all of high church Anglicanism? Are you prepared to endorse what Eliot thought about baptismal regeneration? The Lord's Supper? Celibacy? I should think not! Neither does my quoting from *C '67* imply that I accept as adequate anywhere nearly all of it. It only implies that I endorse at least as much as I quote with approval — just as is the case with you and T.S. Eliot.

Second, you criticize a "questioning approach" that leads to a course "characterized by all kinds of subjective opinions." This approach, you say, "ministers questions" but fails in conveying "God's answers."

This charge is unjust. For one thing, you do not acknowledge that *Beyond Doubt*, as the author's preface states, is an empirical approach to the same material (God, revelation, Christ, salvation) that is addressed confessionally in the first year adult course, *A Place to Stand*. For another, as you do grant in part, there is a perfectly good way of using a "questioning approach" in church education — namely when one raises questions about doctrines not in the sense of raising doubts about them, but in the sense of bringing them up for examination. That is what the Heidelberg Catechism does, for example. And that is what *Beyond Doubt* tries to do no less.

In that connection, let me call to your attention, third, that answers are provided for the questions raised in B.D., either in the meditations themselves or else in the large accompanying answer book. These answers come from the Bible; else they come from our confessions or from Reformed theology. I say what I think only in the same sense that all of us do who preach, i.e., in the sense of applying what Scripture and creed have to say. Obviously, then, when I say in the Preface that course leaders may "use what they can, and let the rest go," I do not mean what Scripture says or what the confessions say. I rather mean to refer to my choice of questions, to their relevance, to the way they are framed, to the use of this Scripture instead of that, and to those places where I make judgments and applications.

I hope these comments may correct any misimpressions left either by *Beyond Doubt* or by your criticism of it.

Cordially in Christ,
Cornelius Plantinga, Jr.
Calvin Theological Seminary

Editor's Response:

I welcome Professor Plantinga's expression of agreement in our concern for the Bible's propositional revelation and for the validity of our church creeds.

His observations about quotations from a document not necessarily implying agreement with the whole of it is a valid point. But doesn't placing the *Confession of '67* at the head of so many articles in the place regularly given to our churches' official creeds, in our catechism series of books, imply some kind of recognition of it as an

authentic Reformed creed? If it does, such a recognition of the Confession of '67 would seem debatable.

As to the "questioning" approach to teaching, used as a teaching method to provoke thought and understanding it can be excellent. But, if it becomes a controlling approach or a guide to the whole theological curriculum, displacing, in effect, the recognition of our established creeds as authoritative statements of "the faith once for all delivered to the saints" it can be — and has become in many present-day churches, completely devastating. Questions can provoke thought. Questions that do not lead to clear and certain answers can increase confusion.

I'm glad to see Professor Plantinga in this letter acknowledge the limitations on dealing with doctrine "in the interrogative mood".

I wrote to urge the exercise of care in preparing and choosing catechism materials that can help us in teaching our Divinely revealed faith.



THE PHILOSOPHY OF REVELATION by Herman Bavinck. Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Michigan. 349 pages, paper. \$7.95. Reviewed by Rev. Jerome Julien.

Originally given as the Stone Lectures for 1908-09 at Princeton Seminary, this volume has as its purpose to set forth the philosophy of revelation. Such a philosophy traces "the idea of revelation, both in its form and in its content," and correlates "it with the rest of our knowledge and life." Bavinck insists that with the reality of revelation "Christianity stands or falls." He develops the importance of revelation as it is seen in relation to philosophy, nature, history, religion, Christianity, experience, culture and the future.

Even though the lectures refer to theologians who were prominent some seventy years ago, the principles outlined in them

are still very important and will prove to be rich to the believer as he seeks to live in the light of God's truth, faithfully to Him.

THE BIBLE AND ISLAM: *Sharing God's Word with a Muslim, a Basic Guide* by Bassam M. Madany. **The Back to God Hour**, 6555 West College Drive, Palos Heights, IL 60463. 1981. 92 pages, paperback. Reviewed by the Editor.

The world-wide attention being given to the Arab world with its costly oil, new wealth and power and political instability is prodding Christians and churches to give renewed attention to the religion of Islam and their Christian missionary responsibility to bring the gospel of Christ in the Islamic world. The barriers to missionary efforts among Muslims (or Moslems) have often been very high, but radio is proving to be one means by which they can be surmounted. And among radio missionary preachers few if any have had a more strategic opportunity or are coming to see more of a response in the Arab world than Rev. Bassam M. Madany of the Back to God Hour. In this little booklet he, out of a deep commitment to the Biblical Reformed Faith and out of very extensive (23-year) experience, shows us how to reach Muslims with the gospel. His thorough knowledge of and use of the Bible and his close acquaintance with Muslim teachings and culture as well as his direct, clear style of writing should make this a very valuable help to all who want to understand and fulfill their Christian missionary responsibility to Muslims. Some today suggest we stress formal similarities between Islam and Christianity, minimize differences and try to establish a common ground in order to facilitate such missionary effort. Rev. Mr. Madany, while deeply sympathetic with the Muslims, points out that their religion lacks a real sense of sin and of man's inability to save himself, and lacks a Savior. Only the gospel of Christ gives us these. Faithfulness to the Lord and love for the lost compel us to say that as plainly as possible. The reader of this little book will better understand how to approach an Arab. He may also get a better understanding of his own Christian faith.

SCOTTISH THEOLOGY: IN RELATION TO CHURCH HISTORY SINCE THE REFORMATION by John Macleod. **The Banner of Truth Trust**, Edinburgh, 1974. 350 pages. \$6.50. Reviewed by Rev. Jerome Julien.

In 1943 these lectures given at the Westminster Theological Seminary at Philadelphia were first published. Again this valuable book has been made available to students of theology and church history.

The late Dr. Macleod, known for his years of service in the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, has done a good job of a very difficult task. Beginning with the Reformation he has traced the development of theology down to the end of the nineteenth century. To trace the development of theology in the Church through a succession of centuries is never a simple and uncomplicated task. To narrow it down to a church existing in the confines of a nation does help to a certain extent. However, there are always outside influences on theology and even in what seems to be a unified movement within the church there are countless variations.

The book has great value for the student of theology and the minister of the Word. It introduces us to the men who helped to shape the Presbyterian Church of Scotland. Sometimes we of the Dutch Calvinist tradition are woefully ignorant of our Calvinist brethren in the British Isles. From these men we could learn much — if we only knew what they once wrote. In this volume we read about David Dickson, Samuel Rutherford, the John Browns, William Cunningham, Robert Candlish, the Erskines and others. And we learn where they stood in relation to that faith once and for all delivered unto the saints.

This is not a book for someone who does not know something about Scottish Church history. The author takes much for granted. He assumes that all the movements and their nicknames are very familiar to the reader. This should not detract from the value of the book. It is worth studying. It will teach the reader much.

THE FORGOTTEN SPURGEON by Iain Murray. **Banner of Truth Trust**, London. 1973. 254 pages, paper. \$1.45. Reviewed by Rev. Jerome Julien.

Normally notice would not be called to a volume which in its earlier edition was reviewed favorably in these pages. However, this second edition contains some new features which will be of interest to those who study Spurgeon or who want to understand something more of the falling away from the Calvinistic faith. Besides a few pictures and some quotations from press releases of Spurgeon's day there is a new chapter on "The Aftermath at the Metropolitan Tabernacle" and a new Appendix — a reprint of a very rare pamphlet of protest written about the down-grade in the days following Spurgeon's ministry.

The chapter on the Metropolitan Tabernacle affords an insight into how American Fundamentalism and its evangelistic methods bring the Calvinistic faith to crumble. A worthwhile contribution in this day of emphasis on anything which some want to call evangelism.