

THE OUTLOOK

DEVOTED TO THE EXPOSITION AND DEFENSE OF THE REFORMED FAITH

JANUARY 1982



STRUCTURE OF GENESIS
ARE THE REFORMED CREEDS
WORTH KEEPING IN SCHOOLS?
EVENING WITH WOMEN'S LIBERATION

MEDITATION

songs of thanksgiving on NEW YEAR'S DAY

John Blankespoor

"The two choirs that gave thanks then took their places in the house of God . . . And on that day they offered great sacrifices, rejoicing because God had given them great joy. The women and children also rejoiced. The sound of rejoicing in Jerusalem could be heard far away," Nehemiah 12:40, 43.

As creatures of time our lives are divided into periods of time — days, weeks, months, years, etc. With God, of course, there is no time as we have it. There will be no clocks or calendars in heaven. At present we are beginning a new cycle of time. And we always wonder what the new year will bring to the world, our own country, and surely also the church and our families, as well as ourselves. Of course, we know "that what has been will be again, what has been done will be done again; there is nothing new under the sun." Nevertheless, we still wonder about the future and often feel insecure.

The Scriptures, however, encourage us to be positive in exercising trust and confidence. Even to be joyful in the knowledge of God's everlasting faithful promises to His people.

The setting of the passage quoted above is the rebuilding of the wall of Jerusalem. Approximately 90 years before this a remnant of the Israelites had returned to Jerusalem from Babylon. Some 75 years later Ezra returned from Babylon to give the people much needed leadership, showing them the way of repentance and the fear of God. Thirteen years after that, Nehemiah came for a relatively brief period of time to help them rebuild the wall. That great undertaking was now finished.

Obviously people weren't always safe in those days. Most towns and cities had walls around them for protection and the gates were closed and locked during the nights. The inhabitants of Jerusalem felt the need of a wall for protection. In 52 days, under the able leadership of Nehemiah, the work was finished. Not only did this wall literally give them protection and security, but it was also a symbol of the spiritual protection of the Lord. In Psalm 48 the Israelites are instructed to walk around the city, to count the many towers and bulwarks. They are reminded that God surrounds His people and He will

be their guide unto death. The rebuilt wall at this time was also faith-strengthening for these people. Now they had much more peace and security. The time had come to dedicate this great God-given wall around the city. It is in this dedication that we find a beautiful expression of faith, which can also teach us something as we face the future of the new year 1982.

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There was a grand march of two groups of people on the wall of the city. Each group was led by a large choir. Following the choirs were the leaders of the people, princes and rulers. The third group consisted of the band and orchestra (with many instruments) of the priests and Levites. And finally, following them were the common people, including the women and children. They joined in the songs. Isn't it interesting that also the children were included and that they too sang with the adults? We read that Ezra joined one group and Nehemiah the other. In the march one of these "complete" groups went to the right and the other to the left. Later, of course, they met and then together they went into the temple, where they brought many sacrifices in the continued spirit of joy for what the Lord had done and would do in the future.

We read that it was a dedication with much gladness. Also that they gave thanks to the Lord and that they rejoiced with great joy. Try to imagine what a wonderful experience this must have been. How stirring it must have been to do all this together in the communion of the saints! The *joy* of Jerusalem (not just some singing) was heard afar off, we read. When one reads this passage and tries to imagine the experience he could wish that he had been there. The wall was finished, and with it the Lord was giving them protection and security for the future.

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What does this mean for us at the beginning of another year? First of all we have much more revelation than did the Old Testament church. Christ, who is the bringer of all blessings and security, has

come. Atonement has been made for the sins of His people; death has been conquered. Today He is Lord in heaven, ruling over the church and world. The Holy Spirit has been poured out into the church. Promises have been given in abundance, which are relevant for all times. Let's look at just a few of these all-comprehensive, far-reaching promises to His people. "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers they shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee," Is. 43:2.

"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, who are the called according to His purpose," Rom. 8:28.

"My grace is sufficient for thee," II Cor. 12:9.

"Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world," Matt. 28:20.

"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever," Ps 23:6.

"As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord surrounds His people, both now and forevermore," Ps 125:1.

We must do with the revelation that we have and the promises given us what the Israelites did with what they had and the completion of the building of this wall. These people sensed the reality that with the wall the Lord would protect them. That truth had gripped them. And they gave expression to their faith in marching with their children, in song, on the wall around the city.

May we meditate on these sure promises. Let the truth of them grip us. May we live much with the Word of God. And pray for grace that all these truths may become more meaningful to us. In 1982 the Lord is still on the throne, He is in control, and is daily gathering His church. Everything is proceeding according to the schedule of His good and all-wise counsel. These assurances He gives to His people. The world lacks assurance and therefore people feel that they are adrift in the experiences and cycles of time. If we are going to do what the Israelites did, we will also sing about these promises, perhaps to ourselves, but surely in church with our fellow Christians. Sing from the heart. Our present and future are safe and sure because of what the Lord is giving and will give to us!

Some people might say, we are living in disturbing times. In many respects the outlook is gloomy. We should therefore be sober. How can we be happy in such a time? The Scriptures teach us that God's people, even when they live in faith, may at times be sad. Consider some of the Psalms, for example. Again and again we read of their troubles, but also amid these troubles we find expressions of joy in the Lord. The experience of sadness and even tears does not necessarily always preclude the experience of joy. I also think of the Apostle Paul. Although a prisoner in Rome, he urges the Philippians to rejoice in the Lord (Phil. 3:1, 4:4). Faith in the Lord will lead to peace, security and joy.

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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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attitudes of elders toward their work

John Kalsbeek*

For the church of God, and especially for each local autonomous congregation, God has instituted the office of elder. Their work is to rule, to have "the oversight" over the church, and to administer discipline. From the point of view of the continuity of the church, the work of the elder is the most demanding and, I dare say, the most important work in the church. It is an undisputed fact that a congregation can exist for years without the benefit of its own minister. But try to imagine the possibility of a church existing at all for any length of time without elders.

Not only is the office of elder extremely important, but it is also of divine appointment. Our Lord determined that men should be appointed to rule in His stead in the church militant on this earth. Although this is unquestionably true, it's also true that nowhere in Scripture do we find this office instituted by the church like the office of deacon was in Acts 6. The reason why this is so is that the office of the elder was already in existence at the earliest time of the New Testament Church.

History

The office of the elder is of ancient origin. It goes way back to the time of Moses or before in the Old Testament. We first read about "elders" in Exodus 3:16 when God commands Moses to return to Egypt and "gather the elders of Israel together, and say unto them..." At this time the elders were the older and wiser men of the nation of Israel who were appointed to rule and govern Israel both politically and spiritually. Repeatedly the term is used in this sense in the Old Testament.

*Mr. Kalsbeek, principal of the Protestant Reformed Christian School, Redlands, CA, read this paper at an Elders' Conference of his church on Sept. 1, 1981.

During the captivity and the four-hundred-year intertestamentary period we see the beginnings of worship in the synagogues. The size of these synagogues differed, just as our churches differ in size today, but they all had elders to rule over the members of the flock. When the New Testament church came into being it wisely adopted the practice of appointing elders, just as had been done in the synagogues. Thus we read about the work of elders and their qualifications in the New Testament, in I Tim. 3:1-7 and 4:12, Titus 1:6-9, James 5:14, and other passages, but never read about the institution of the office. It was already in use.

During the fourth and fifth century of the church, the office of the elder experienced a drastic and devastating change. It was a change that destroyed for the next ten to eleven hundred years not only the original intent of the office but also the office itself. Teaching elders (clergy) began to assume to themselves absolute power and authority. The members of the congregation were denied any right to rule at all. This movement resulted in a hierarchical system still in existence in the Roman Catholic and episcopal churches. Bishops vied with each other for power until the bishop of Rome became the pope with virtually absolute power in all matters.

This situation continued until the time of the Reformation. It was John Calvin, not Luther, who again insisted on the importance of elders in the church. Thus the presbyterian system of church polity was restored at the time of the Great Reformation.

The presbyterian system of church government was and is still used by two rather large groups of churches: the Reformed and the Presbyterian. According to Gerard Berghoef and Lester De Koster in *The Elders Handbook*:

The Presbyterian and Reformed Churches locate authority, derived from Christ, in the congregation's eldership. Broader assemblies de-

rive their authority, by delegation from the local council, or consistory or session . . . , p. 38.

Rev. Wm. Henry Roberts, a presbyterian minister, writes in his *A Manual For Ruling Elders and Church Sessions*: (pp. 19-20)

Presbyterian principles in the matter of church government stated briefly are as follows: that Christ is the only Head of the Church; that all true believers are in union with Christ as their Head; that Christ has appointed a government in His Church . . . that the church possesses authority to discipline offenders and to administer government . . .

Spiritual Character

We who believe the presbyterian system to be correct base that belief on Scripture. True, Scripture does not lay out a detailed specific plan of church government. It does, however, lay down some general principles. It talks about the church itself, about the minister of the Word, about elders and deacons, about the council held in Jerusalem at the end of Paul's first missionary journey. On the basis of these and many other passages, the Reformed and Presbyterian churches have built the system of church government peculiar to them.

Churches of Reformed and presbyterian persuasion who have spiritually wise and diligent elders experience one of the greatest blessings that God can possibly give His church here on this earth. It pleases God to use not only trained ministers in their office, but also humble men, often with little formal education and in lowly stations of life, to rule over His church. Here we see again the so-called foolishness of God that is wiser than men.

In the fields of government, business, education and finance the most important qualifications demanded of an applicant for a position are often education and wealth. But in the church of Jesus Christ these qualifications are not determinative because they are never given in Scripture. God in His church exalts the lowly and humbles the proud. This principle is repeatedly demonstrated in Scripture. Joseph, the prisoner, becomes the ruler of Egypt. Gideon, the farmer, and Jephthah, the outcast, become judges. David, the shepherd, is made king. The shepherd of Tekoah, Amos, is called to be a prophet. The child in the cattle stall becomes the Savior of the world.

God in His church opens up the office of elder, the important position of rulership, to the lowly, the meek, the poor, the spiritually minded and those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, the peacemakers, the merciful, those who mourn over their sin, the pure in heart, those persecuted for righteousness sake. Such individuals inherit the kingdom of heaven and are deemed suitable to rule in the church of Christ here below. And churches that nominate and elect elders on that basis rather than on the basis of wealth and education or any other non-spiritual qualification will be the most blessed.

Much can be found in books on church polity and in the handbooks for elders on the qualifications of

elders and on their work. Every elder should make use of these important aids in his work as elder. I highly recommend *The Elders Handbook* by Berghoef and De Koster. But very little can be found about the attitude of elders toward their work. It's that subject that I wish to address in this paper.

Attitude of the Elder

I'm sure no one will quarrel with me about the importance of a man's attitude toward his wife, his children, his work, the church, the office bearers in the church, the minister and so forth. Such attitudes determine in large measure the way a person thinks and acts towards others and the value he places on certain things. According to the *World Book Encyclopedia Dictionary*, an attitude is "a way of thinking, acting, or feeling; the feeling, manner, or behavior of a person toward a situation or cause."

A woman who despises her husband will not readily submit to his rule. A congregation which doubts the integrity of its minister or that strongly dislikes his personality or style of pulpit delivery no longer listens easily to the preaching of the Word. A child who is bored with his school work no longer studies well. Attitudes are very important. I dare say they play a major part in shaping our personality.

So also, attitudes are important in regard to the work of the elder. Bad attitudes produce bad elders. And they trouble the church. Good attitudes produce good elders who bring peace and blessing to the congregation.

I list here a number of attitudes that elders sometimes have and/or take toward their work. Some may be more common than others. I have a feeling that some apply to every one of us. The order in which they will be considered is not significant. I'm not trying to rate them on a scale of bad to good or more serious to less serious attitude problems. My hope and desire is to make us aware of some of the objectionable attitudes we may evidence so that we can attempt to correct them.

Personal Attitudes

The first one I'd like to consider is the *nonchalant* attitude. One who has this attitude lacks enthusiasm, feeling or interest for the work of elder. He takes a casual or indifferent attitude towards his calling. It's just another job he has to suffer through. He often complains about the demands of the office and the fact that it keeps him so busy. Almost from the time he's installed he's talking about how anxious he is for his term to end. Generally, a person with such an attitude waits until the very last day or hour before a consistory meeting to do the work given him and sometimes doesn't even get to it at all.

Next we have the *let the minister do the work* attitude. This is based on the idea that since the minister is specially trained and the elder is not, he is better able to do it. On the surface this appears to be sound reasoning. It's certainly true that the minister has more formal training. But such an attitude can very easily lead to hierarchy on the congregational level. And this must be avoided at all cost.

Elders, although perhaps lacking in training, must be involved in the work of the church. This will require much diligent study. It may mean an extra meeting a month by the elders to consider and discuss various aspects of their work. Here the older, experienced elders could give some excellent advice and training to the younger or newer elders.

Then there is the *if I'm elected I'll straighten things out* attitude. The basic and obvious problem here is a rather generous dose of pride. One with this attitude thinks that he has the answers and the solutions to any problems that may arise in the church. Such a one is often inclined to barge right in where angels fear to tread. One with this attitude generally lacks the necessary patience, and wants to see immediate, if not sooner, results.

Next, we have the *I'm not qualified* attitude. Such an elder presents a very pathetic picture and in reality denies the power of the Spirit to call and qualify him for the office. I'm sure everyone feels or has felt this lack of qualification when the notice comes that the consistory has nominated him for the office of elder. For some men this becomes such an urgent matter that they wrongfully ask to have their names removed from the nomination. However, when God by means of the congregation calls us as elders, we may no longer carry with us this *I'm not qualified* attitude. Do we not answer "yes" to the first question of the ordination form for elders and deacons: "And in the first place I ask you, both elders and deacons, whether you do not feel in your hearts, that ye are lawfully called of God's church, and consequently of God Himself to these your respective holy offices?" If God calls you to be an elder in His church, will He not also qualify you for the work? One who carries this attitude with him into the office is afraid to make important decisions. One who doubts his ability to do the work of the elder becomes a burden to his fellow elders and to the congregation.

These are some of the personal attitudes we have to fight against as individuals. There are also bad attitudes that elders sometimes have *collectively* as office bearers.

Collective Attitudes

A very serious one is the *let's not offend the congregation* attitude. Such an attitude may seem on the surface to have some merit. And I'm not suggesting that we take a course of action which deliberately and unnecessarily offends the brethren. What I have in mind are those times when certain decisions need to be made for the welfare of the congregation. And because these kinds of decisions are unpopular, we take the inoffensive way of compromise.

Such action does not bless the congregation! Elders must never be afraid to do what is right, certainly you need to be responsive to the needs of the congregation — no doubt about it. But remember that ultimately you as elders are responsible to God and to Him alone. When you do His will you need not be afraid to offend a few members or even many members in the congregation.

Another collective attitude problem is the *it's not that important — let's wait till next time* attitude. The work of the church is always important. It is never wise to put it off or prolong it unnecessarily. This excuse is often used when committees fail to do their work. To permit this to happen frequently is disorderly and troublesome to the consistory and congregation. Often it's the disagreeable tasks that we put off until a later date in the hope that the problem will go away by itself. Seldom, if ever, does this happen. More frequently the little problem turns into a festering sore. There is absolutely no room for "politics" in the church and in its consistory. Politics *in* the church means trouble *for* the church.

Another collective attitude that sometimes troubles congregations is the attitude that *the elders alone know what's right for the church or congregation*. The direct result of this attitude is the serious problem of elders lording it over the church. When this becomes prevalent, one begins to notice that the congregation is kept in the dark about certain actions of which they should be informed. Other actions are covered up so the congregation will not find out what is going on. Congregational decisions are ignored and sometimes not even carried out because the elders know better than the congregation. Some even dare to assert that the congregation didn't know what it was doing anyway. Such an attitude and its direct results eventually disrupt the unity and the harmony of the church.

Finally, we would direct your attention to an unbrotherly attitude sometimes held by elders toward an individual member of the congregation.

This is the *there goes the old troublemaker again* attitude. Often the church, probably every congregation, has one or two or more members who have problems. Sometimes these are sin problems — over and over again a member may have to be visited and admonished to live a sanctified life. They become a source of frustration and grief for the elders, so that they tend to throw up their hands and cry, "what's the use?" On the other hand, there may be members who are diligent in contending for the faith once given to the saints. They point out and expose problems and difficulties that they see. They are concerned for the sake of the truth and for the congregation. Often they are wrongfully called "trouble makers." When elders take the attitude that "it's just that old trouble maker again," they tend to ignore that person. They are reluctant to visit that person. It's very possible that they put off visiting him or make no attempt to visit at all. When this happens they are doing a disservice to that member, to the congregation, and to Christ Himself who is the Lord of the church. When this happens the elders have forgotten that the people of God are like sheep that often go astray. From a human viewpoint such a discriminatory attitude is understandable; from God's viewpoint it is intolerable.

These are a few of the attitudes that office bearers have to fight against. Wrong attitudes are sinful attitudes and are troublesome to the church of Christ. Office bearers need to be prayerfully on

their guard against wrong attitudes within themselves and within their fellow office bearers.

The Proper Attitude

However, this paper would be incomplete without saying a few words about the proper attitude of elders toward their work.

The proper attitudes needed for the office of elder must be rooted in humility. Pride has absolutely no place in the elders' bench. The elder has to have a deep-seated reverence for God and for His Word. Elders must be captive to that Word and be guided by it. Elders must humbly submit to that Word and although placed in a position of rulership must ever realize that they are servants of God and thus also of

God's people. They should frequently remind themselves of the example Christ set at the last supper when He washed the feet of His disciples. Wise elders acknowledge that in their own strength they are unable to do the work they are called to do, but are diligent in that work anyway knowing that God will qualify them with His wisdom and grace. They are not afraid of what men will say but will do all to the glory of God. Their chief motivation is the welfare of God's people and of their fellow saints. God has blessed our churches with God-fearing elders. For that we must be forever thankful. Our calling as churches is to continue to seek men for the office who are spiritually qualified. Your calling as elders is to continue to rule as Christ's representatives. ●

Are the Reformed Creeds Worth Keeping in Schools



JOHN M. FRAME

Mr. Myron D. Rau in our November issue called attention to a proposal to remove the Reformed creeds from the bases of our Christian schools in an effort to broaden their appeal to non-Reformed people. When a similar proposal was made a decade ago Professor John M. Frame, a delegate to the Christian school convention, alerted the other delegates to its significance, and it was defeated. Professor Frame, now Associate Professor of Apologetics and Systematic Theology at the new Westminster Theological Seminary at Escondido, California, analyzes the new proposal, which ought to be studied and discussed by all who love our schools.

For many years now, voices in the Christian school movement have supported the formulation and adoption of "educational creeds" to replace the historic church creeds as the basis for Christian education. N. H. Beversluis (in *The Banner*, July 20, 1981) reports that "In the 1920's Clarence Bouma made an eloquent appeal to the schools to base themselves not on church creeds but on a reformed educational creed" (p. 14). Ten years ago, the National Union of Christian Schools (now Christian Schools International) discussed the adoption of a new "basis article" for its constitution. The original proposal eliminated reference to any church creeds and put in their place a rather skeletal formulation of reformed educational philosophy. The NUCS found this formulation quite inadequate. It was pointed out that this educational creed did not even include a clear statement of biblical authority, but instead referred vaguely to a threefold word of God in creation, Christ and Scripture, with no indication as to how these three "words" related to one another. The NUCS convention meeting in Langley, B.C. decisively rejected this plan. The following year, the NUCS adopted another statement which

made clear the continued allegiance of the organization both to Scripture and to the historic Reformed confessions.

But the issue will not go away. It has been raised again by the formation of a CSI task force to study "Strategies in Christian Education for the 1980's." The task force has produced a document called *Christian Educational Philosophy: A Creedal Summary*, a draft which may, after some revision, be proposed as a new basis for CSI schools. Beversluis, chairman of the task force, sees this sort of document as furnishing "an alternative to church-creed subscription" (above-cited *Banner* article, p. 15). As I see it, four important questions emerge from this project, questions which CSI (and all of us who are concerned about Christian education) must ponder very seriously:

1. How should this issue be resolved?

In 1971, the proposal to revise the NUCS basis was prepared so quietly that much of the membership of the organization scarcely knew what was happening. There had been very little discussion of the document in NUCS or Christian Reformed publications — certainly no comprehensive exposition and analysis of it, certainly no critical discussion pro and con. Members of my own local school board found it difficult even to obtain copies of the document prior to the convention. At the convention itself, I discovered that many of the delegates had not read the proposal at all and were taking its soundness for granted. Most were extremely surprised to discover, during the floor debate, the serious, tragic weaknesses of the new proposed Basis.

One would think that the NUCS (CSI) had learned a lesson in 1971-72. Sadly, however, I read that "meanwhile, our schools are about to begin writing a new chapter and they are going about it in their usual quiet way" (editorial by A. K. in *The Banner*, Sept. 21, 1981, "Christian Day Schools and Evangelism"). Mr. Myron Rau ("An Ecumenical Christian School Creed," *The Outlook*, Nov., 1981) reports that this project has been "quietly done through the school administrators with total disregard to boards and school societies." Rau says, "I received a copy of the material in question by making inquiry to CSI as a result of *The Banner* article . . . and not because I happened to be a member of the school board."

I find it utterly incomprehensible that such a major issue could be treated in secrecy. Imagine what would happen if the Christian Reformed Church were to consider elimination of the Heidelberg Catechism from its constitution. The issue would be so momentous that every classis, every congregation, every family, every publication, every college or seminary professor would be deeply preoccupied with the question. Opinions would be expressed at great length, and doubtless action on the proposal would be postponed again and again until everyone was convinced that the issue had been fully discussed. Now I don't want to press too far the parallel between CSI and the CRC. But anyone with a grain of sense can understand that creedal revision in any Christian body is a matter of utmost importance, at

least for that body. *Nothing* can be more crucial. This matter must *not* be voted on until there have been intense discussions both in local school boards and in the annual meeting. There must be thorough analyses presented, both orally and in print. There must be discussion pro and con in all periodicals of the churches and of the Christian education movement.

Brothers and sisters, we are children of the *light*. Suppression of debate, or restriction of it to an elite, has no place in the body of Christ. All of us have a stake in these matters. If a new idea will not survive close examination by the boards and school societies, then it *ought* to be defeated. It is our right to demand full information; and we *dare* not adopt a new proposal without it.

2. Do we need an educational creed?

Let us now look, in a preliminary way, at some of the matters in question. For many, the chief issue seems to be, simply, the desirability of an educational creed. Scripture, after all, says much that is relevant to education, and it stands to reason that a concise summary of this biblical material would be extremely useful. God certainly has not stopped teaching his people since the seventeenth century. The great work of Kuyper and his followers has taught us much about the educational imperatives of Scripture. Thus we cannot remain satisfied with the old creeds; we must press on. We must *confess* what God has taught us recently in this area; and it is appropriate that such a confession be found in the constitution of a Christian school system.

Do I agree with this argument? Of course! It is Scriptural, Reformed, cogent. Do we need an educational creed? Certainly we do.

You see, there is this misconception around that when people oppose the sort of package proposed by Beversluis they are necessarily opposing the idea of an educational creed as such. Thus we (we opponents) are accused of being traditionalists, opposed to progress in understanding, uninterested in the *relevance* of our confession to the work of education in the 1980's. Granted, some such reactionary attitudes exist in our circles; but please, do not accuse *all* of us of harboring such ideas. If someone writes a really Scriptural and helpful educational creed, he will have my enthusiastic support.

3. Must we eliminate the church creeds?

But the real issue here is *not* the desirability of an educational creed as such. The real issue is whether such a creed ought to *replace* the church creeds in the Christian schools' constitution, or only to *supplement* them. Granted that an educational creed is desirable, should we therefore seek to eliminate the church creeds? Remember, the two issues are distinct. One can, in perfect consistency, advocate educational creeds while also wanting to keep the church creeds. And that, I think, is the best position to take. Let me examine three common arguments against the use of church creeds in Christian schools:

(a) Some have argued that the church creeds are too narrow in their scope to be suitable for use in educational institutions. Cf., e.g., articles by Hendrik Hart and Paul Schrottenboer in the *International Reformed Bulletin* (Spring-Summer, 1972). The argument goes that "institutional churches" such as the Christian Reformed Church address human life from only one of its "aspects": these institutional churches deal with us in the area of "confession" or "faith" or "worship". The churches, therefore, are "worship-organizations", not educational or labor or political organizations. Therefore the church creeds are relevant to worship or confession, but not to education, labor or politics.

There is some truth in this argument. Certainly a church is not a school, a labor union or a political party. But I think it is unscriptural to represent the church as only one of many "organizations" which equally represent the body of Christ. In Scripture, the church has a special, focal position. The church is the body of Christ. Its apostles, prophets, pastors and teachers are officers of the body, not merely officers of one "organization." And the purpose of the church is not narrowly limited to "worship." Its purpose may be described in terms of "confession" or "faith," but only if those terms be understood broadly. It is the job of the church to provide motivation and direction for believers in *all* areas of life, and to bring unbelievers to a knowledge of the Christian life in its fullness.

Thus the historic confessions are *not* limited to "worship," or even to "faith" or "confession" if those terms are understood in some narrow sense. Read them! Reformed denominations have generally adopted "directories of worship," indeed, because their basic confessions (such as the Westminster Confession or the Belgic Confession) said *very little* about worship. Reformed confessions present the basic biblical gospel of salvation — a gospel which bears equally upon all aspects of life. They (especially the catechisms) present elaborate discussions of the law of God, of Christian ethics — commandments which we must keep in view all the time. The creeds are not as exhaustive as Scripture itself is, but *their scope is just as broad as Scripture*. They seek to do nothing less than to summarize that gospel which Scripture itself identifies as its chief content. Every Christian organization needs to hear the message of the creeds, for it is the same as the message of Scripture.

(b) A second argument one hears is that, granting the *general* relevance of church creeds to education, many of the *details* of the creeds are irrelevant. Two observations: First, it is interesting that no one ever says this about the Scriptures, though *prima facie* there would seem to be large stretches of Scripture, too, that are of relatively little interest to education. The reason is that, of course, we all know that you can't pick and choose within Scripture. The gospel message is defined by the whole Bible, not by some red-letter sections. To apply the argument to the creeds seems to me a bit more plausible, but equally silly. Second, what doctrines of the creeds are "irrelevant to education?" Christology? Divine sover-

eignty? The doctrine of the church? It is easy enough to make broad, sweeping claims about the irrelevance of church creeds to education, but it is very difficult to single out specifically which doctrines can be omitted. We shall see below how the task force draft seeks in vain to bypass the Calvinist/Arminian issues. If we seriously intend to base our educational program upon the *gospel* of Jesus Christ, and if we sincerely accept our creeds as statements of the gospel, how can anything in those creeds be set aside?

(c) The third argument is that church creeds hinder ecumenicity in education. Beversluis comments (in the above-cited article):

... we cannot in good conscience continue to accept the children (in some instances one-third to one half of the school population) and the money of non-Reformed parents, cannot claim to be living in Christian fellowship with them, and then continue to treat them as second-class participants. What alternative to church-creed subscription could there be? (p. 15)

I have some sympathy for this argument. I'm happy to see CSI "reaching out." As a non-Dutchman and a non-member of the CRC, I have long felt that CSI was rather too provincial both ethnically and ecclesiastically. And I applaud the desire to reach out even beyond the Reformed community. However, I really doubt that the theological differences between Reformed and non-Reformed traditions can be avoided in the educational context (see #4 for a case study). Further, I think that to compromise the Reformed doctrines is to deprive ourselves of the highest *quality* contact with non-Reformed evangelicals. The fact is that many evangelicals today are attracted to Reformed schools precisely because of our *distinctives*. My friend Jim Veldkamp is a Reformed scholar in the field of education who has had much contact with non-Reformed evangelicals over the last few years. He tells me that at one fundamentalist college there is a faculty study group going through Norman de Jong's *Education in the Truth*. He says that he has had many opportunities to discuss Reformed philosophy of education with such brethren. And neither de Jong nor Veldkamp seeks to play down the doctrines of the creeds. The pervasiveness of secular humanism in our time has led many evangelicals to seek out the one branch of Protestantism with a carefully thought-out theology of education — the Reformed branch. Will we so dilute our own commitment that we will have nothing unique to offer our evangelical brethren? The possibility is disconcerting.

It seems to me, therefore, that it would be unwise to drop the church creeds from our school constitution unless an alternative can be found which states as comprehensively as the Reformed creeds the biblical gospel. So far as I know, none of the proposed "educational creeds" states, as clearly and fully as the historic creeds, the gospel we believe. Thus we ought to maintain the church creeds, *supplemented* by statements of educational philosophy which apply the gospel to specifically educational matters. ●

the Bible and the creeds do not teach UNCONDITIONAL GOOD NEWS

Jelle Tuininga

In our July, 1981 issue Rev. Jelle Tuininga in an article entitled, "Is the Gospel a Mere Announcement?" cited Biblical and confessional objections to the kind of "Biblical Universalism" advocated by Rev. Neal Punt in his book Unconditional Good News. In this article Rev. J. Tuininga, pastor of the First Christian Reformed Church of Lethbridge, Alberta, deals further with this view.

In this article I want to make some summarizing, concluding remarks, and also touch on a few remaining issues.

Punt wants us to believe that he is not in conflict with our creeds. I am convinced he is. Not that he is an Arminian: he wants to uphold biblical particularism, and the sovereignty of grace in our salvation. However, he does not want to consider the human race as lost apart from Christ. He keeps objecting to what he calls "the unproven assumption" that "all persons are outside of Christ except those who the Bible declares will be saved." Also, he does not want to equate "being worthy of eternal judgment" with "being outside of Christ." In further correspondence he writes: "To say 'the promise of the gospel is that whosoever believes in Christ crucified shall not perish but have eternal life' is not to say 'only those who believe in Christ crucified shall not perish . . .'"

Now I don't care to work with assumptions, and I don't have to assume "that those who are being addressed are 'elect in Christ'" when I bring the Word (cf. Punt, p. 135), but neither do I have to assume they are lost. I must simply bring the gospel, for without the gospel they are lost. That much is clear. No one is saved except through Jesus Christ. There

is one name under heaven by which men must be saved; no other. And now it's a biblical fact of history that all men fell in Adam unto condemnation. Paul says they are by nature dead in sin (Eph. 2). Dead is dead, and no man comes alive unless the Spirit of Christ makes him alive. To say it with Spykman (in a helpful essay in *Life is Religion*):

. . . our starting point must be the Biblical witness to the actual, historical, human condition of universal reprobation resulting from mankind's fall into sin. . . Methodologically, we are to begin not with "limited election," but with the human predicament of unlimited reprobation into which the mass of mankind was corporately plunged as a result of our original sin. Reprobation is therefore not so much a mystery as the awful enigma of covenantal unfaithfulness, from which believers are delivered by God's electing grace. The "greater mystery" is election.

As a result, in Adam, our representative head, we all became reprobate. . . Condemnation came to rest upon all men (hence the great relief of Romans 8:1 — "no condemnation").

(pp. 185, 187)

So it is. And that's precisely what our creeds teach too, and no amount of finagling can get around that. There is no condemnation to those who are in Christ. That means there is condemnation to those apart from Christ, and that is the biblical premise we begin with. Arts. 14-16 of the Belgic Confession, L.D.s 3 & 4 & 10 of the H.C.; Par. 5 of Rej. of Errors, Chap. II, and Par. 1, Rej. of Errors, Chaps. III/IV of the Canons of Dort all teach this. And Punt's teaching is not in harmony with what our confessions here teach. Paragraph 5, Rej. of Errors, Chap. II of

the Canons explicitly condemns the error of those who say "that no one shall be condemned" because of original sin. That is clear language. This is also why the Committee that studied the Boer gravamen *did not* draw the conclusion that Punt draws: namely, that all infants who die are saved. That is an unwarranted conclusion from the Committee's report, and from Scripture itself. Says J. G. Feenstra in his *De Dordtse Leerregelen*: "Concerning the children of unbelievers the Scripture does not express itself. Nowhere in Scripture do we find for them the promises of God, but certainly for the children of believers." Punt ought not to go beyond what the Scripture teaches. As for the Boer Study Committee's statement that no one is condemned apart from actual sin, it must be remembered that all men *did sin* in Adam: "In Adam's fall we sinned all." And so all men are held responsible for that sin too. It's just another way of saying that man is responsible for his own condemnation, children included. Covenant children, however, are sanctified in Christ by virtue of God's covenant, and by virtue of that covenant we need not even doubt the salvation of those who die in infancy.

Punt likes to think that many more will be saved than is generally believed in Reformed circles. Well, we don't have to argue about figures. To the man who wanted to do that, Jesus replied: Strive to enter in! At the same time, to think that many who appear to live in total indifference to the gospel and never darken the door of a church, might still somehow be counted among the elect, is to engage in wishful thinking. Recently a correspondent in the Netherlands wrote: Years ago if you did not go to church on my street, you were an exception. Now if you do go you are an exception. The same is true of countless streets in the U.S.A. and Canada. Are we still to think that many of them are "elect" and will be saved? Not unless they repent and live a God-glorifying life. Punt must take seriously the biblical teaching about the broad way which is crowded and the narrow way which few find. He must also take seriously Peter's warning that if the righteous are scarcely saved, where will the ungodly and sinner land up? (I Pet. 4:18). Does Punt mean to say that even in lands where 1% of the population is Christian, more than 50% might still be saved? Experience only confirms the biblical teaching that a remnant shall be saved, due alone to God's grace. They are saved by grace through faith alone. Here I quote with endorsement the comments of Dr. Eugene Rubingh in one of his missionary letters:

To suggest that one may go through year after year of apathy and unconcern regarding God and his will, and yet be saved, does give me pause. Is not such unconcern and apathy really rejection? Rejection needs better definition than Punt has yet provided. . . . I have not discovered in Punt's thinking anything that makes faith crucial or of life-and-death importance.

Well said indeed! It is worth quoting Murray here again:

Regeneration is the act of God and of God alone. But faith is not the act of God; it is not God who believes in Christ for salvation, it is the sinner. It is by God's grace that a person is able to believe but faith is an activity on the part of the person and of him alone. In faith *we* receive and rest upon Christ alone for salvation.

It might be said: this is a strange mixture. God alone regenerates. We alone believe. And we believe in Christ alone for salvation. But this is precisely the way it is. It is well for us to appreciate all that is implied in the combination, for it is God's way of salvation and it expresses his supreme wisdom and grace. In salvation God does not deal with us as machines; he deals with us as persons and therefore salvation brings the whole range of our activity within its scope. By grace we are saved through faith (cf. Eph. 2:8).

Punt puts forth the thesis that the Holy Spirit may work in some people apart from the gospel. He needs this thesis for his overall argument. But he ought to realize that this is a bit of unbiblical speculation that stems from A. Kuyper, but has never been accepted in the best Reformed tradition. The Bible and our confessions give no credence to this idea. Cf. Q & A. 65 of the H.C.; Arts. 11 & 12 of Chap. III/IV of the Canons.

Finally, regarding the cultural mandate, Punt makes the point that "**believers must regard all others as joined with them in obeying the cultural mandate unless and until those with whom they work reject the revelation God has given in nature and dissociate themselves from the knowledge of and truth of God in Christ**" (p. 130). Once again I consider this a totally unwarranted and unbiblical notion that stems from Punt's overall thesis. Here indeed we have the common grace idea which sees a certain commonality between all men, and which either denies or downplays the doctrine of the antithesis. This is what Hoeksema was afraid of and objected to in 1924. Punt fails to see the radical antithesis between the two kingdoms in this world, that of light and darkness, of Christ and the devil. Even though unbelievers can do so-called "civic good," this is not owing to any goodness in them, but solely to God's revelation which impinges on them. But their hearts are still directed away from God, while the believer's heart is directed toward God in all that he does. There is no neutrality. He who is not for me is against me, said Christ. Cyrus and Hiram did much for God's people in the O.T., but they were not obeying the cultural mandate. God used them for his kingdom, but they were not co-partners for God's kingdom or co-workers for Christ. Neither is the "good" or "decent" unbeliever. Many of them simply ignore God and His commandments, or have hardly a faint inkling of what the gospel is all about. And without faith (saving faith in the Redeemer) it is impossible to please God.

In conclusion, it is still a mystery to me how Dr. A. C. De Jong could give such an endorsement to this book. It misses the boat in so many fundamental ways. I hope Punt (& De Jong) come to see this. ●

an Evening with Women's Liberation

Peter De Jong

The fall public meeting sponsored by the Committee for Women in the Christian Reformed Church was held in the Calvin Seminary auditorium on October 26. This organization was established to get church offices opened to women and its meeting gave an interesting introduction to one of the most aggressive pressure groups operating in the denomination. It featured a panel of 4 speakers consisting of Joy De Boer, Joan Flikkema, its executive secretary, Professor Harold Dekker of the Calvin Seminary faculty, and Dr. Louis Vos of the Calvin College Bible department.

The Panel

First Joy De Boer expressed her frustration, anger, and feeling of injury that the denomination's June synod had not made more progress in getting church offices opened to women. She commented on the lack of women delegates at the synod, the patronizing or sometimes joking way in which delegates spoke on the issue and the frustrating delays of repeated committee reports, but thought she saw some faint indications of progress in realizing their long promoted aim.

Professor Harold Dekker of Calvin Seminary proposed to make some observations not particularly Biblical or theological or even ecclesiastical, but practical and political. In speaking about politics he did not intend to use the word in an unsavory sense. Having been involved in church synods for a number of years (Seminary professors are synod advisors.) and now also having served on the local city council for a decade, he observed that the dynamics, methods and procedures were much the same in both areas. He'd learned his politics in the church. In civic matters the political character of the operation is more frankly recognized, but he thought that the political character of church bodies ought to be more openly acknowledged — both, in their political maneuvering to be considered ministries of God.

Regarding synod from this perspective, he noticed that there is little change of mind at synod by advisory committee reports on long-debated issues.

Procedures determine the outcome. At the last synod's dealing with the women's issue there were no substantive decisions. Synod officers have a decisive role; they opened the way for the suggestion of another study and postponement. In the synod's moving in this direction neither side was ready for a showdown. They saw the risk of losing and possible serious damage to the church, by defections or possibly a split. The danger of a split Dekker thought was exaggerated, but the fear was there. Perhaps the conservatives had the votes, but the outcome was a stall. Professor Dekker's advice to the women (and he stated later in the discussion that he had been in sympathy with their cause for 20 years) was to become more frankly political in their campaign for women in office. If procedures and leaders determine decisions we must deal with these matters in personal relations as well as in a Biblical and theological manner. If you do this, men may respect you the more because they do it all the time. One must "lobby" in the same way people do in the city council. The decision to have another study committee on the principle of "headship" he saw as more political than theological, just as when the city council does not want to make a decision it may resort to a similar stall. Ultimately, Dekker expected a political decision, perhaps for local option and a further erosion of the unity of the denomination and of its authority. That has been the direction in which the church has been moving.

Joan Flikkema, executive secretary of the organization, called attention to the existing wide diversity of practice within the denomination. While some churches do not even have women voting at congregational meetings, one church in Chicago, one in Grand Rapids and one in New Jersey have had them preaching. She saw the issue as simply one of discrimination against women, who equally share the image of God, a discrimination like that against the blacks. She saw too much apathy. She insisted, citing some prominent Roman Catholic clerics, that sexism is sin. She was confident that the battle for equality will be won because the Holy Spirit will

compel the church to acknowledge and use women's gifts.

Dr. Louis Vos, professor of Religion and Theology at Calvin College, encouraged the women with his vision of a bright future for their cause. He observed that no synod in the last 10 years has said that women may not serve as deacons or even as elders or ministers. Synods have officially left Scripture texts out of consideration and have never disciplined members of their committees who stated that there were no Biblical objections to women in the offices. He saw a growing awareness of the roles women have had in our churches' missions and a growing sense of guilt because women were not getting their rights (on the part of the "conscientious!"). He called attention to the important 1972 (and 1973) synod report on the nature of office, which he thought ought to be cited more than it has been in the women's cause. (This is the report, prepared by a committee of which Dr. Louis Vos was himself a member, which synods criticized as failing to do justice to the "authority" of church offices!) In this bright future for women he saw "separatist" tendencies on the part of those who disagree, citing especially the "deplorable" development of a body of men establishing a new seminary holding a principle of no ordination for women. He saw the synods running out of plausible excuses for further study and delay in giving women their rights, and assured them that the Spirit of Pentecost would have the women prophesying.

Discussion

The ensuing discussion produced some interesting exchanges between panel members and their hearers. As was apparent also at this meeting, the women's issue did not seem to be getting widespread or general interest and support among the students. The conservative shift in society may make it seem dated. It was suggested that getting a woman preacher such as Mrs. Rienstra to lead chapel, as has been done, might help to arouse interest.

One student observed that his Wisconsin church didn't even have women voting and the whole classis was rather "backward" in this matter. He was advised to start working on his parents and the preacher. Professor Dekker suggested that one see that "the next minister has got the right idea." And Dr. Vos suggested that one had to learn how to use the Scripture. He recalled how he had accused an elder delegate of misquoting the scripture when the elder cited the 1 Tim. 2:11 ff. passage as applying in the church. (It was ironic that, the professor conveniently ignored the fact that although the elder may have put "in church" in the wrong verse, that that whole section of 1 Timothy is explained by Paul as being his direction on "how men ought to behave themselves in . . . the church of the living God," 1 Tim. 3:15, and the largely amused audience did not seem to realize how the professor was himself playing games with them as well as with the Bible.)

What will happen in the future? There seems to be a likelihood of local option with each church doing

as it sees fit. Joan Flikkema thought the synods should have ordered that women vote. She too sees a prospect of local option but this leaves her dissatisfied. It would still foster the idea that those who oppose the movement have some credibility, some right to their view, in other words.

A student expressed his concern about the meeting. He sensed that what seemed most prominent was not what was God's will, but what could be made to work. He was not convinced that it was God's will that women be eligible for the ministry. Dr. Vos hastened to reassure him that of course all were concerned about God's will. The student, however, did not see it in the meeting or the literature.

Another student saw this movement as disrupting society and young people getting disgusted with it as it tore households apart, showed a lack of love, fostered an atmosphere of combat, and lacked Christian humility. Joan Flikkema responded that she had long tried to be meek until a minister correctly reminded her that the "meek shall inherit the earth!" The freshman student's claim that the movement was disrupting society, she alleged, did not have the support of sociological statistics. Professor Dekker suggested that the price of progress is conflict.

There was objection to the way only one side of the issue was being presented. To that the retort was that in the past attempts had been made to have both sides presented, but difficulty had been encountered in getting representation of the other side. From an argument about right or wrong the development had been toward a two-sided struggle.

Another student described how his church in Canada had lost 18 or 20 of its founding families over this issue. Although they had much of the congregation in sympathy with them, they had left the denomination over this issue. What was a minister to do about this? Others observed that people were leaving also because women were not getting into office.

Some Conclusions

The meeting was illuminating in a number of ways. It revealed the determination of some that women, in one way or another, will be given the offices in the church. It revealed by the comparatively small attendance, I believe, something of the numerical weakness of the movement, but also revealed something of the kind of faculty support it is being given in college and seminary. Students who disagree with it may encounter opposition and ridicule, and may have their Biblical convictions eroded by the influence of their professors. Professor Dekker's observations about the churches' course being politically rather than biblically determined were strikingly like the observations of John Vander Ploeg, Jr. as an elder delegate to the last synod (December OUTLOOK). There was the difference, that while Vander Ploeg was shocked by some of the politicking, Dekker regards it as normal procedure. While choosing delegates with a view to their convictions may be legitimate, the cynical disregard of Bible and creeds, and the pragmatic ma-

nipulation of rules and committees to get one's own way, ought to be rejected as intolerable in the Lord's church. One noted that even some of the students, new to the scene, sensed the lack of serious concern with God's Word, and the determination to have one's own way by tactics that are borrowed from the secular world, in a movement that has been seeking a leading role in the church.

It was striking at this meeting (as it also was in the past speeches and literature of this movement) that the speakers repeatedly assumed and assured the audience that the campaign to get women into office was the work of the Holy Spirit (the "Spirit of Pentecost," Vos said). To this fact the somewhat weary and frustrated supporters were directed for encouragement and from it they were assured of ultimate victory. While we need not question the depth of their conviction on this point we must question its validity. Merely assuring the audience that the movement and its proceedings are the work of the Holy Spirit does not make that claim true.

God's Word warns us that we always have to "Try the spirits whether they be of God." And the means that He has given us to make that test is His inspired Gospel. The spirit that inspires people or churches to ignore or twist the Scriptures to serve their own end, to resort to political trickery instead of honest discussion as to what is God's revealed will, the spirit that animates the current secular liberation movement in its effort to overthrow legitimate authority and God's law in church and state, is not the Holy Spirit, but it is his great imitator and enemy. The Lord warned us from the point at which He began to speak of His church, of the devil's invariable effort to mislead the church even through deceiving the Lord's apostles (Matt. 16:18 ff.). We will have to begin distinguishing between the two kinds of "spiritual" guidance if we are to escape our churches' increasing "doublemindedness," which, as James (Jas. 1:6, 7) wrote, betrays an eroding faith and prevents receiving the blessing of God.

Marten H. Woudstra

The Structure of the Book of Genesis

Critics of the Bible have long alleged that the book of Genesis is composed of a number of diverse documents, some from a much later date, which do not really fit together. Various kinds of evidence can be cited against this critics' theory. The October 31, 1981 Grand Rapids Press reported that "A five-year-long computer study . . . strongly indicates that one author — and not three as widely held in modern criticism — wrote the book of Genesis.

"The probability of Genesis having been written by one author is enormously high — 82 percent statistically," a member of the research team said in an article published in Wednesday's Jerusalem Post.

Dr. Marten H. Woudstra, Professor of Old Testament at Calvin Theological Seminary, in this article, shows us how the structure of the book of Genesis contradicts critical theories by revealing its unity.

Attentive Bible readers have long recognized that the book of Genesis is divided into several subdivisions, each marked at the beginning with the same Hebrew word. This word is variously translated. The King James renders it uniformly with "generations" (see Gen. 2:4; 6:9 etc.). Other English translations have realized that although the Hebrew word is the same, one cannot always render it with the same English word. For this reason they sometimes use the word "history," "genealogy," or "account."

A Significant Word

The Hebrew word underlying these translations is the word *toledot* (pronounce: TOH'-le-DOHT). One finds this word used at the following points: Gen. 2:4; 5:1; 6:9; 10:1; 11:10; 11:27; 25:12; 25:19; 36:1 (also 36:9) and 37:2.

When a word like this occurs at significant points in a book such as Genesis the Bible reader should in-

quire whether the use of this word has probably a special significance. It might well be that the writer of the book meant to alert us to the purpose and the plan he had in constructing the book. To discern such a plan would naturally be of the utmost importance for a believing use of his inspired writing. It is not we who must give meaning to the Bible. No, we must obediently listen to the Bible in order thus to perceive God's Word.

Listening to the Bible means, among other things, that we are conscious of the design and purpose of a book. Careful attention to various features in a book such as Genesis and other books as well may disclose to us the writer's aim in composing the book. In doing so we will be able to discern the Spirit's meaning and it is that meaning which we wish to receive believingly for ourselves and transmit to others.

The Hebrew word translated "generations," "history," "account," is derived from a verb form which means "to bear," "to bring forth." It is a noun form derived from this verb. The noun is in the plural. Literally this noun means something like "the things brought forth," or "the things that came of . . ." Hence it will be seen that the word "history" is really quite a good rendering for this word.

Thus, when the story of creation has been given us in Genesis 1:1-2:3 the writer continues to tell us that he will now give us the "generations of the heaven and the earth." This means, he will speak of what happened to heaven and earth after they were created. So he sets out to tell us about the garden, the trees, the temptation and the fall. This is followed by the first promise.

But this first subdivision of the "Generations" does not end there. The writer also informs us of the slaying of Abel by his brother Cain and then he traces the line of Cain and its accomplishments down to seven generations. At that point the line of Cain is dropped. Chapter 5 begins with the line of Adam via Seth. Cain is no longer mentioned.

This is a feature which has been noted by careful students of the Bible. The book of Genesis uses this system of the "generations" (toledot) in order to draw an ever narrowing line through the history of redemption. The reason for this is that the book is concerned to give us the line of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. For it is in that line that God's promise of salvation will ultimately be realized.

A Narrowing Line

This is why in the line of Noah there is a focusing on Shem (see Gen. 9:25-27). And in the 10th chapter, which contains the "generations" of Noah's sons, one finds that the usual order of the three sons is changed. Instead of listing them in the order Shem, Ham and Japhet, this chapter first describes the line of Japhet, then that of Ham, and finally it centers on Shem. This is why the great Reformed Biblical scholar Geerhardus Vos can justly say that chapter 10 is "a chapter that belongs to the genealogy of redemption."

It should be clear, therefore, that Genesis clearly tells us that long before God called Abraham, in

order to make a new beginning with him, there already was a trend toward the particular. God made divisions even before he called Abraham.

What should be kept in mind, therefore, as we read the book of Genesis, is that this book helps us, by its very structure, to understand what it is driving at. The book draws lines from one incision point to the next. And in doing so it focuses on the particular grace of God. God will save people from all nations, kindreds and tongues. But He does so as a God who makes divisions. God has a "people" that is peculiarly His own. In the Old Testament this people was defined (after Abraham) by mostly national boundaries. In the New Testament the ethnic difference of God's people disappears. But the idea of peoplehood as such does not. It is imprinted on the "goods" of salvation and is never again erased. It is true, gloriously true, that in Abraham all the families of the earth will be blessed and have been blessed. This is why there is a Christian church today, spread throughout the earth, and not limited to Abraham's descendants by any means. Yet that church is today just as defined as "people of God" as it was in the Old Testament.

The Line of Covenant Promise

But there is more that we can learn from paying attention to these "generations" divisions of the book of Genesis. As was noted earlier, these headings alert us to lines of development. They do not focus on individuals as such but they indicate how God traced the "history" from one point to the next. Hence we are kept from centering unduly on biographical details in the lives of the people described. Note for example that the great figure of father Abraham is not accorded a separate subdivision. All the many important things we must know about Abraham are arranged under the title of the "generations" of Terah. This may appear strange to those who have followed the custom of treating the great ones of the Bible as just so many "Bible characters." But in God's way of writing history this is not strange at all. It is not Abraham and Sarah that should be the focus of our attention. Rather, it is the fulfilment of the promise of the "seed" that makes them so all important for us.

This is the reason why right from the start the writer informs us that "Sarai was barren" (Gen. 11:30). And as if this one statement was not enough he adds: "She had no child." Twice he alerts the reader to the tremendous drama that will unfold as the line is drawn from Terah to Isaac (after Ishmael has been eliminated) (see Gen. 25:12-18; Gen. 25:19).

Unity of the Book

We believe that a careful attention to this structural arrangement which the Holy Spirit placed in the book of Genesis will serve yet another important purpose. All too often the first 11 chapters of Genesis are set apart as being of an altogether unique nature, requiring quite a special set of rules of understanding. But the thing that comes to light is that the writer of the book of Genesis did not see these chapters as being so completely different. Instead,

he links Abraham, through his father Terah, to that which precedes. That is what determines Abraham, as much as the call that will come to him later. The great incision in the book of Genesis is not chapter 12, but chapter 11:27. From that point God will draw the line forward, though it may seem humanly impossible since Sarai was barren and had no children.

The Critics' Error

Paying close attention to this arrangement of the book of Genesis yields still further benefits. It is often said that Gen. 1 and Gen. 2 contain two creation accounts. Critical scholars assign the first account to the Priestly document which is said to have achieved its final form in the time of the Babylonian exile. The second account is then assigned to another "document," called the Jehovist document. This is not the place to discuss this approach to Genesis in detail. We believe that it is a fruitless approach and that it cannot do justice to the Biblical data.

Well-informed and enlightened conservatives such as Horace Hummel, R. K. Harrison and others reject the documentary approach to the Pentateuch. Hummel puts it strongly but correctly:

It almost goes without saying that both the literary and the historical reconstructions of higher criticism conflict so drastically with the Bible's own presentation that "ne'er the twain shall meet." To be blunt, really no one denies that, except certain administrators at times when higher criticism is first invading an institution, and the *hoi polloi* need to be mollified. Far more, of course, is involved than merely re-shuffling dates and authors, because, within limits, that by itself, could be quite an innocuous matter theologically. Nothing less than a fundamentally different version of the Christian faith is entailed . . ." (*The Word Becoming Flesh*, 1979, p. 58)

It is because of this other, radical alternative to the book of Genesis and to the other early books of the Old Testament, that we should do our utmost to listen faithfully and believingly to what the Spirit Himself says by way of the arrangement of the book.

One Revealed History

Genesis 2:4 ff. is not a second creation account. Rather, it is the first major division of the "generations." There is indeed some repetition of the details of creation, some of which are presented in an order different from that of Genesis 1. But the focus is on the garden, the trees, and on the first human pair in relation to these trees. Thus viewed, this section fits harmoniously into the larger whole. Its style differs from that of Genesis 1. God is "closer" to man in chapter 2 than he is in ch. 1. He forms man of dust from the earth. He forms Eve from Adam's side. In ch. 3 He walks in the garden. Later He is seen to be fashioning clothes for the first human pair to cover their nakedness of which they had become aware.

But the arrangement of Genesis as here discussed does not suggest a second account of creation. In-

stead it focuses on what became of heaven and earth when they were made. Man, earth's chief creation, fell and was alienated from his Maker. Brother murders brother. The line of Cain is traced and then dropped from view.

It is this organic and Scriptural view which in the present writer's opinion offers an infinitely better understanding of these early chapters than any documentary theory can ever accomplish. For this, and also for the other reasons mentioned earlier, I commend this approach to the readers. ⑨

TITHING

*I can't afford to tithe, my friend,
I just don't have the money;
My debts are more than I take in —
I tell you that's not funny.
That car I bought the other day,
It's sure a lovely jewel;
But I just never realized
How hard it was on fuel.
The house we lived in was so small
And so we built this new one;
But man, the interest sure went up!
Another debt to chew on.
I will admit sometimes we splurge
When we go out to dinner;
(It doesn't help our diets
We're trying to get thinner.)
But like I told my neighbor,
I need some relaxation;
Cause Boy, those bills sure get me down,
I need some recreation.
Of course the church needs money
And I sure try to give some
But with all this inflation
It takes a lot to live on.
Someday when I get caught up
I'll give a big donation;
It's not that I don't want to give,
It's just my situation.
I can't afford to tithe, my friend,
And I am really sorry;
When I get rid of all my debts
Then I won't have to worry.
You can't afford to tithe, my friend?
O how much you are missing!
Dependence on our God above
Brings an abundant blessing.
To be His hands in this dark world
To help someone who's dying;
No joy could ever be as great
As this, to know you're trying.
To give back to our Blessed Lord
A part of what He's given
That He may even use it
To bring a soul to heaven.
You can't afford to tithe, my friend?
I too am really sorry;
You see, I doubt if there will be
A day when you'll not worry.*

Anetta Jansen
Dorr, Michigan

NAIVETE

The word "naive" means an innocent, childlike, unsuspecting, sometimes foolish simplicity that can easily be misled. Rev. Richard E. Knodel, the pastor of an Orthodox Presbyterian Church at Lynchburg, Virginia, writing in the October 14, 1981, *Presbyterian Journal*, expressed some apprehensions about the prospective merger of his denomination with two other conservative Presbyterian bodies. He observed that there is "a kind of . . . naivete in the OPC . . . a kind of innocence that I have seen in those who have not experienced the battle with liberalism first hand." He noted that some of them had been "insulated . . . from some of the more protracted struggles" for 40 years.

He followed this with an observation about some Christian Reformed people.

An illustration comes to mind from the 1977 NAPARC (National Association of Presbyterian and Reformed Churches) conference on the diaconate in Pittsburgh. Men of the CRC, ostensibly leaders in that church, were advocating a hermeneutic which was essentially no different from that which I had grown up with in the UPCUSA (United Presbyterian Church in the USA). It was relativistic and corrupt, and yet there they were, representing a Calvinistic church with an old and yet vital tradition. How they attained their positions I do not know. But somewhere along the way they were aided by the naivete of others and their unwillingness to speak up.

If the Orthodox Presbyterians are, as one of their ministers thinks, somewhat handicapped in facing present problems by a naivete that has developed in the 40 years since the battles with apostasy out of which the denomination was born, he may also be correct in sensing within Christian Reformed circles a naivete that has had three times as long a time to develop since our secession birth struggles. The idea has long been common throughout our CR denomination that while all around us churches were obviously losing out under the attack of prevailing liberalism we were comfortably isolated from most of those problems by our seasoned orthodoxy. That illusion, that, "Of course, it can't happen to us" is one of our most serious handicaps in dealing with the problem that "It is happening to us."

Some years ago one of the Missouri Synod Lutheran church leaders, speaking in Grand Rapids about the struggle with liberalism in his denomination, called attention to a similar naivete which had to be corrected if one were to deal effectively with this problem. He told of his experience in graduate study at a German university. If one would ask his roommate whether he believed in the resurrection, the answer would have been a reassuring "yes." Many naive conservatives, satisfied concerning the student's orthodoxy, would let the matter go at that point. The speaker pointed out that in today's religious world one can't let matters rest with that kind of question. If that student were asked further, "Do you believe that the body returned out of the grave, hair, toenails and all?" the answer would have been, "Of course, I don't believe that!"

The experience of our last Christian Reformed synod highlighted our comparable need to get rid of our naivete and to ask such more searching questions. The man seeking candidacy was questioned in a general way about his views. Then the chairman of the advisory committee, Rev. Peter Brouwer, pointed out that the interviewer, Rev. John Vriend, was not asking the questions that he was supposed to raise. "Was there a real serpent? . . . a real tree? . . . a real voice speaking?" That kind of further questioning helped to expose Mr. Libolt's real views, as he was not ready to affirm that these were "real" in the sense that the questioner meant.

The outcome of that matter was that one who had been strongly recommended by our seminary faculty and board was rejected by an almost 2/3 vote of the synod because of his defective views of the Bible. This case has dramatically demonstrated the rift between the views of the Bible which are held by the churches and those being considered acceptable by our seminary for training ministers of those churches.

Since the synod met the school administration has been sending delegations around the country seeking to reassure each of the church classes of its orthodoxy. It has been explained that the faculty (and board) may not have been aware of the applicant's objectionable views because they did not conduct and hear the same examination as the synod did and therefore could not know his views. Such an excuse

appears untenable when one considers that within the faculty and board objections were registered against Mr. Libolt's views. Even after those views were exposed at the synod examination some continued to defend them. Furthermore, if neither board nor faculty majority can discover the kind of objectionable views of the Bible which were plainly demonstrated to the synod, would this not indicate a naivete about these basic matters that disqualifies one from doing battle for God's truth in today's unbelieving world?

Especially enlightening on this subject is the Apostle Paul's inspired description of the role and function of "pastors and teachers" (Ephesians 4:11-16). He states that the Lord gave them "for the perfecting of the saints, unto the work of minister-

ing, unto the building up of the body of Christ; till we all attain unto the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a fullgrown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ: that we may be no longer children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men in craftiness, after the wiles of error; but speaking truth in love, may grow up in all things unto him who is the head, even Christ..." Note that the labor of the God-given pastor and teacher must be directed toward the maturing of the saints so that they are delivered from the childish naivete which makes them susceptible to being blown about by deceptive winds of doctrine and, instead, may grow up in the faith and knowledge of Christ. ●

Henry Vander Kam

Letter to the Ephesians

THE CONTRAST BETWEEN THE BELIEVER'S AND UNBELIEVER'S LIFE.

Lesson 9

Ephesians 4:17-24

The church of Jesus Christ will somehow display a unity in the midst of a hostile world. We often despair of such a unity, but it is a fact despite the fact that there are all manner of branches of that one church of Christ. The Bible speaks of that unity often and there must be a display of it so that the world may also know the work which Christ Jesus has come to do.

Living the Faith

Now, therefore, i.e., because of all that has gone before, (Paul will emphasize, not only his own view of the matter, but he speaks in the name of his Lord) believers are to seek that unity of which he spoke by their manner of life. The believer must indeed believe that which is straight, which is true, which is *ortho-dox*, but that true belief must be accompanied by a life which is in tune with the doctrines believed.

Therefore they are not to live as the gentiles. But, were these not gentiles to whom he is writing? He uses the term "gentiles" in two different senses. All those who were not Jews were gentiles and therefore these people in Ephesus, to whom he was writing, were indeed gentiles. However, one may also use the term in a different way to indicate those who are ungodly or uncivilized. It is in the latter manner that he uses the term here. The people Paul addresses have heard and believed the gospel, they were converted, they belong to Christ and consequently to His church, therefore they may no longer live as though nothing had taken place in their lives. They must walk in conformity to the faith they profess. How often this teaching is found in the Apostolic writings! It is one thing to profess the faith which has been proclaimed — it is a different matter to walk according to that rule.

Futility of Pagan Life

But, the readers of this epistle will certainly realize that the way of life which the Apostle has

shown them is the only logical way. One who professes the true faith and then walks as the gentiles, is a living lie! The gentiles walk in the vanity, or futility, of their minds. They expect much of this world and this life, but it is vain and futile. It is disappointing. Nothing is adequately rewarded. In contrast, the life of the believer is rewarded far above anything he would ever be able to expect. *The Lord pays well!* It is also the only logical and consistent way of life. It is really a sad commentary on the believer's way of life that the Apostle must emphasize this matter so strongly. It ought to be a matter of course! In gratitude he ought to live a God glorifying life.

Ignorance of Unbelief

To make it even clearer why the believer is not to live as his unbelieving neighbors do, the Apostle gives a characterization of the life of the unbelievers. They are darkened in their understanding. That is, the unbelieving world which thinks that it has all wisdom and is therefore able to get along very well without God. Paul says their minds are dark — they live in intellectual gloom! They always were darkened in their minds and still are. The reasoning of the unbeliever has been affected by sin. This is a part of total depravity. He has spoken before of the fact that these Ephesian Christians had once been alienated from the commonwealth of Israel etc. Now he says of the gentiles around them that they are alienated from the life of God! That is much worse. Why is it so much worse for those who are now still gentiles? Because the gospel has come to Ephesus and they have, in their ignorance, spurned that gospel. Then it hardens. The gospel leaves no one the same. It is either a savor of life to life or it is a savor of death to death. Consciously these people had hardened themselves against the gospel. They consciously rejected it. These are now alienated from the life of God and have no part in the blessings given through Jesus Christ!

Moral Degeneracy

When this hardening occurs, it does not only affect the relationship to God and the gospel, no, it corrupts all relationships! This must never be lost from sight. Often the unbeliever is a "nice" person. Those who have hardened themselves become past feeling, they become calloused. Then they are basically not even "nice people" anymore. When people are beyond feeling they no longer realize their duties to fellow men. It is so strange that they then give themselves up to all uncleanness, i.e., on the surface. Why does this happen? When one consciously turns against the gospel of Jesus Christ and rejects it, he descends from that which is truly human to the animal level. Christ has come to fulfill, to complete the law of God. Only when men walk according to the law their God has given them will they attain to their true humanity. Therefore, whenever someone turns his back on the gospel he dehumanizes himself and gives himself to all manner of lewdness and covets iniquity.

Christ's Pupils

Having described the nature of the life of such gentiles, the Apostle warns believers not to imitate this kind of life. Not only so, he shows them that the very opposite way of life has been taught them. They have "learned Christ". By this he means that they have not only learned about the Christ of God, but that they have learned to know *Him!* They have not only learned Him, but they are bound to Him. The acquaintance with Jesus Christ, and, what is far more, the implanting into Jesus Christ prohibits the kind of life the gentiles live. They have learned to know Christ so that they realize that He demands a life of devotion to Himself and a life which is unspotted by the sin of this world. They have learned to know Him as the One who leads to an essentially different outlook on life and goal in life. If they have learned to know Him they will flee from the kind of life they see the gentile living.

The things he is here contrasting ought to be clear to everyone who has heard the gospel of Jesus Christ. They have heard the word, have they not? They have heard that truth is in Jesus, have they not? He (Christ) makes Himself known as the truth. Not only does He speak the truth — He is the truth! All the truths which are important to life are found in Him. Only He is able to make known the depth of man's sin. Of course, He is the only One who has made known the need and the nature of salvation. He too makes known to man the life of gratitude which he is to live before his God. Now, these are the essentials of knowledge. These are the things one must know both to live and die happily. The gentiles do not have the knowledge of any of these things. What is then the result? They give themselves up to all manner of sin and finally drown in their misery.

A Converted Life

Seeing these Ephesian Christians have been taught to know Christ and to know that truth is in Him alone, they must break with their former manner of life. They knew what the Apostle had been speaking about. They knew from experience. Their former life was like the unbelievers around them at the present time. But, they have been delivered from the bondage of that kind of life which those who practice it call freedom. They must realize that the salvation which they now embrace demands a complete turnabout of all of life. It is not only a religion of the mouth but of both word and deed. The whole outlook on life has been radically changed for those who believe in Jesus.

A Process of Putting Off the Old

The Apostle now uses terminology which he uses more often to show them how complete this change is to be. First of all, they must put off the old man. By this old man he means the former way of life, the life which was steeped in sin. Of course, basically they had put off the old man when they believed on Jesus Christ — when they had come to conversion. Then why this emphasis now? This is a very impor-

tant passage to show us that everything is not completed when we have come to conversion. This is one of the errors which is commonly found today. Let a person confess that he believes on the Christ of God and he has arrived! You can now go on to the next one! This kind of theology Paul condemns. Although something great has taken place when the eyes are opened and the Savior is acknowledged, there is still a long road ahead. One has to keep on putting off the old man — that which entices to sin. The believer is faced with the temptations to sin every day. Their former manner of life may not be lived anymore — but the temptation is there to do so. It is indeed one act of God whereby the believer has been brought from death to life, but for the believer himself there is a process whereby he becomes more Christ-like.

Put On The New

The believer is, however, not only called to put off the old man but he is also admonished to put on the new man. Christianity is not only negative (it is that too) but it also has a very definite positive aspect. The old man was the product of sin; the new man comes out of regeneration. A new life has been created. This has to be evident in the life of him who professes to believe on Jesus as his Lord and Savior. The redeemed man must die to the old and be made alive to the new. He must turn from sin and seek holiness. He must learn to hate sin and love righteousness. He must flee the chaos of lawlessness and must rejoice in the law of God. He has indeed become a new creature!

In these verses the Apostle has taught the people in Ephesus, and thereby the church of all subsequent ages, the true *balance* which must characterize the life of those who have been redeemed by the blood of Christ. They must believe and work; they are faced with do's and don'ts; there is both the negative and the positive. Those who live according to the teaching of the Scriptures are not going to fall into the extremes which are so often seen. The Bible is to be our guide for all of life. It shows us the way of salvation and also teaches us how we are to live. When one tampers with the Bible he is undermining the faith and life of the people of God!

Questions for discussion:

1. Paul judges the understanding of believers to be far superior to that of unbelievers. How does the modern world judge this?
2. How does the process of hardening proceed?
3. Do you think that there are people who would like to stop with justification and forget about sanctification?
4. How have we learned to know Christ? Is it important how we learn to know Him? Are there some who have or are learning to know Him in the wrong way?
5. Is the believer still totally depraved?
6. Do we usually emphasize either the negative or the positive in our Christian life at the expense of the other? How can we keep our spiritual balance?

SPECIFIC ADMONITIONS TO THE EPHESIANS.

Lesson 10

Ephesians 4:25-32

In the preceding paragraph the author has spoken of the antithesis between believer and unbeliever in his mode of life. He presented the principles on which a believing life is to be built. Now he is going from the general to the particular, he will become very practical in his teaching.

Stop Lying

Because of the things he has taught them in the previous paragraph, they will be able to understand the things he will now teach them. As they had been admonished to put off the old man of sin, so must they also put off the speaking of lies. This seems to be so elementary that one might wonder why the Apostle makes a point of mentioning this — and making it first in a series of admonitions. The law of God also forbids the speaking of falsehood (ninth commandment), because this is such a common sin. All sins fall under the moral law of God and of the six commandments dealing with our relationship to our fellow-man, one has to be devoted to this particular evil. Those who have come to believe the gospel and have given themselves wholly to it are to refrain from speaking falsehood. Instead, they are to speak the truth each one with his neighbor: for we are members one of another. To speak the lie is to break the brotherhood. Such practices make it impossible for the one to have true fellowship with the other. The lie destroys the church! The lie destroys friendship! The lie destroys the family! In the words of Jesus: Our yes must be yes and our no must be no. This sounds so simple, but it is one of the most profound of all His recorded statements and it is one which is violated more often than almost any other. That one is not able to depend on the word of the unbeliever might be expected; but the unbeliever often puts the believer to shame in this area of life. And, when you cannot depend on someone's word, all relationships with him are broken.

Righteous Anger

The place of anger in the life of any human being and especially in the life of a Christian is an important matter for anyone to consider. There is much anger displayed every day. There is anger displayed by believers too. Is this proper? Most of the time it is not because it is an evidence of the presence of the old man of sin. But, it is unscriptural to say that all anger is sin. God is angry with the wicked every day. Our Lord was angry at times when He was here on earth. It would be well if believers today would be filled with righteous anger more often! When a worldly view of love is emphasized in the church, there is no longer anger against sin! The sinful

deeds of men and the falsehoods spoken under the guise of the gospel ought to fill our hearts with anger. But, care must be taken that it is not a sinful anger — in other words, there is an anger which is not sinful. Nor, adds the Apostle, may we let the day come to an end while we are still angry. What does he mean by this? We may indeed be angry with the sinful deeds of others. However, before the day has come to a close, we must be reconciled. If anger is allowed to continue it will destroy the person who harbors it, and that too will destroy the fellowship of believers. I believe that the Apostle is here emphasizing the need for *mutual discipline*. Be angry with your brother when he goes contrary to the will of God! Then see to it that this offense is removed the same day! This will make for a *healthy* relationship among believers. If this pattern of life is not followed, the devil will be the victor. The anger may have been righteous, but if the matter is not settled by means of confession and forgiveness, the devil has won the day. Righteous anger when not soon removed leads to a hardening and it soon becomes unrighteous!

Don't Steal, but Work

If the sin of bearing false witness is still common to the present day, surely the sin mentioned in verse 28 is not common (?). Paul tells those who are stealing not to continue in this error. This was a common sin. Those who do not speak the truth have already laid the groundwork for stealing another's goods. It was common in the heathen world of that day as it is in the heathen world of today. But, believers of every age better examine themselves too. Instead of stealing he should labor with his hands. He should engage in honest toil because such toil will be rewarded and he will then have sufficient to give to those who are not able to work. Paul's work ethic is mentioned in many of his letters. He himself worked day and night, and he does not approve of anyone not doing an honest day's work if he is able. Poverty is no blessing! It should be avoided and everything should be done to uproot it. By being diligent in his work a man will have more than enough for himself. Woe to those who do not alleviate the need of others!

No Foul Language

No one can deny that the Apostle is dealing with practical things and that he is specific in his admonitions. Believers' words must be true (vs. 25) but even more is required. The tongue is a very dangerous member of our bodies as well as a very important member. It must speak the truth and it may not speak that which is filthy! Dirty talk is one of the devil's devices which he uses to corrupt men in the unbelieving world and even the believers are not immune to its temptation. The lie leads to all manner of sin . . . to stealing etc. Filthy speech leads to many other sins, all of these sins destroy the brotherhood! How dare men speak filth with the same tongue which is used to pray to their God!

Constructive Talk

As he spoke of these things in the previous paragraph and in the first verses of this present paragraph, so he does here. It is not only a matter of "Don't do this"! He also emphasizes the positive. They must not engage in filthy talk but they are to use their speech organs for a better purpose. They must use their speech to build up their fellow believer in the faith. This is not to be done in a very unrealistic way, but "as the need may be". Then you have to know the need! Speak so that it fits the situation! In this way your speech will be a blessing to those who hear it. Corrupt speech breaks down the fellowship of believers; godly speech builds it up.

Don't Grieve the Holy Spirit

The things of which Paul has spoken ought to be "natural" for the Ephesian Christians. Not only have they believed in Jesus Christ unto redemption, they have, of course, also received the Holy Spirit when they believed. The Spirit of God dwells within the believer to make him ever more holy. If such a person, in whom the Spirit resides, does the works of the world, he grieves the Spirit of God. The Spirit seeks his welfare now and for eternity, and he goes contrary to it if he sins as the unbeliever. Those who commit these sins are, therefore, working against their own welfare. The gift of the Spirit to them was the down payment of their full salvation. In Him they are sealed till the day of redemption.

Sins to Be Discarded

In the conclusion of this section the Apostle mentions various sins, mostly of the tongue, or at least beginning there. Readers must be on the alert that they do not fall into the trap laid by the evil one by means of these sins. False speaking will lead to bitterness. This does not remain a sin of the tongue but ruins the heart and mind. Wrath and anger, too, consume those who practice these things. Clamor and railing go even beyond the former. They become loud protest and accusation against the fellow man. When these various steps have been taken they will lead to malice, i.e., the spirit which seeks the ruin of the opponent. The one sin begets the other, and each one is more evil than the one before. Now all these things must be put away from you, says Paul. There is no place in the life and conduct of the one who professes the name of Jesus Christ for such things as he has mentioned. Those who make themselves guilty of these sins have raised a real question as to the sincerity of their profession. Besides, they will be stumbling blocks to others.

Christian Virtues

As he has done before, so now the author reminds readers of the positive goals to which they are called as well as of the spurning of vices which they find in the unbelieving world around them. If the heart of man is desperately evil, then keep it tightly closed? No. If the tongue is capable of all these evils men-

tioned, then never speak again? No. God's gifts have been given to be used and not to be buried. Therefore, instead of all the evils mentioned, believers are to be kind one to another. All the things Paul mentions in the last verse of this chapter are, of course, to be done from the heart. Everyone knows what kindness is. This, they must practice, and it must be like the kindness God has shown to them. They are to be tenderhearted. They must be compassionate. The nature of the church demands that when one suffers all suffer and when one is glad all rejoice with him. This requires a compassionate heart. That is a heart which enters into the feelings of others. This is the essence of love.

One more item is mentioned — that they are to forgive one another as God also in Christ forgave them. This same note is sounded in the prayer our Lord taught us. "Forgive us . . . as we forgive." To do this is difficult, in fact, impossible for those who have not been forgiven. But, the ten thousand talents which have been forgiven us are not to be compared to the hundred pence which we are asked to forgive. Yet, men find forgiving very difficult. How is this possible! Or have such people never tasted the forgiving love of God? To be forgiven we must repent. Those who find it difficult to forgive their

fellow man also find it very difficult to repent of their own sins. It is the pride of the human hearts which makes it almost impossible to live according to the Apostle's injunction and thus makes it so difficult for them to be members of the church of Christ!

Questions for discussion:

1. Do you know many people you can really depend on? Will they speak the truth regardless of consequences?
2. Is it considered "nice" to be angry at something? Should we be angry or should love cover all things? What do you think of the statement heard almost daily: We must hate sin but love the sinner? Is this statement found in the Bible?
3. How far must we go in giving to the needs of others? Can we also do a real disservice to some by helping them out?
4. Is all spiritual talk edifying? What do you think of those who say "Praise the Lord" ten times in a ten minute conversation?
5. How do we get rid of such evils as are spoken of in verse 31?
6. May we ever sit in judgment on the spiritual life of another? Must we do so at times? Why is it important to understand this correctly?

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NOAH, by F. Steinmann and D. Kohl, Eerdmans, 1979, 63 pp. paper, \$1.95.

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FROM RATIONALISM TO IRRATIONALITY: THE DECLINE OF THE WESTERN MIND FROM THE RENAISSANCE TO THE PRESENT, by C. Gregg Singer, Presbyterian and Reformed, 1979, 479 pp. paper, \$14.50.

GOOD MORNING, LORD, INSPIRATIONS FROM ISAIAH, by Nelle A. Vander Ark, Baker, 1980, 121 pp. hardcover, \$3.75.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

A KUYPER ON HEADSHIP

Rev. P. De Jong, Sioux Center, Iowa
4855 Starr Street, S.E. November 2, 1981
Grand Rapids, Mich. 49506

Dear Brother:

Recently, I have been studying about "headship" in the works of Dr. A. Kuyper. I thought it might be interesting for the readers of *The Outlook*. I will quote a few statements from Dr. A. Kuyper.

"The Scriptures clearly indicate that she may not hold an ecclesiastical office. I Cor. 14:34, I Timothy 2:12, I Cor. 11:8-9 and Ephesians 5:22, 24, 25, maintain that man is the head of the woman. This headship is not only effective for earthly relations but also for the church. The emancipation of women, involving the rejection of the headship of man is a terrible sin. If it comes to the point that man becomes feminine and the woman become masculine, the judgments of God will fall upon society and society will disintegrate. Therefore, the headship of man must be maintained both in the marriage relation and in the church. Women may not hold office in the church. (*Locus Creaturis*, P. 57)

"The word "head" in many instances refers to one who has the authority to make decisions, as a head of a firm, the head of a company, the head of a school etc. In marriage it means that man is vested with authority to make final decisions. This authority is placed on the same line, as the authority which Christ exercises over the church. Eph. 5:22-23, "Wives submit yourselves to your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church; for he is the Savior of the body" (E. Voto II, p. 48-51 and IV p. 74.)

"The institution of marriage is a wonderful artifice of God. Thru marriage all of society becomes an organism. From the family comes the human race and necessitates the building of cities and towns. Governments in every city and state are determined by the contrast between men

and women. Women bring forth life and become it's guardian. If Adam did not receive a helpmeet, there was practically nothing for him to accomplish. Sympathy, emotional warmth and feelings would not be possible, if Adam had remained alone. There is no harmony without contrast. And if human life is to be developed harmoniously, then the difference between men and women must be maintained. The emancipation of women is therefore a heinous sin. The masculinizing of women and the feminizing of men is a punishment sent by God for apostasy" Isaiah 3:12. (*Locus de Homine*, p. 59.)

Rev. De Jong, many congratulations for the very fine work accomplished through *The Outlook* in the midst of the many problems facing our denomination today. Greetings to you and yours and your staff.

C. Van Schouwen

DUTCH CASSETTE LIBRARY

Dear Editor:

Would you please pass on the following information to the readers of *The Outlook*.

Of all the Dutch emigrants who came to Canada and the United States since World War II, at least 5000 families joined the Christian Reformed Church. Although many of them became quite fluent in the English language, most of them have not forgotten their native language. Especially at an older age the mother tongue seems to come back more and more. At the same time, problems with vision and difficulty with reading may occur; in addition, many elderly are shut-ins and not able to regularly attend church services, church programs and other church related activities. It is for this group of people that the CASSETTE LIBRARY *LUISTERPOST* was developed. This library contains over a thousand tape cassettes of good Reformed Dutch sermons, lectures, and religious musical programs. This service is FREE of charge. Anyone interested may borrow as many tape cassettes as they would like, provided they pay for their own postage. An up-to-date catalog listing all the available tapes will be furnished upon request. Call or contact: Cassette Library *Luisterpost*, N.A., 2638 Alger, S.E., Grand Rapids, Michigan 49506. Telephone: (616) 949-7423.

Thank you in advance for your kind cooperation. Please receive my heartiest greetings.

Yours in Christ,

Theresa H. Meester (Mrs. W. D.)

A LOOK AT BOOKS

THE JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES AND PROPHETIC SPECULATION, by Edmond Charles Gruss. Presbyterian and Reformed, Nutley, N.J., 1972. 127 pp., \$2.95 paper. Reviewed by Rev. Jerome Julien.

The Jehovah's Witnesses, known for setting dates for the end of the world, have an erroneous way of looking at Biblical chronology. This, Gruss, a former Jehovah's Witness, points out. He challenges them to test their system of thought by the Bible. This is a valuable contribution on one aspect of the Jehovah's Witness error.

A LIFTING UP FOR THE DOWNCAST, by William Bridge. Edinburgh, Banner of Truth, 1979. 287 pp. \$3.95, paper. Reviewed by Rev. Jerome Julien.

These thirteen sermons on Psalm 42:11, preached in London in 1648, fully explain the meaning and application of this familiar text. The purpose of these messages is to give the comfort of Jesus Christ where there is deep discouragement and despair.

THE SEPARATED LIFE: A STUDY OF BASIC PRINCIPLES by Johannes G. Vos. Great Commission Publications, 7401 Old York Road, Philadelphia, PA 19126. 35 pages. \$.35. Reviewed by Rev. Jerome Julien, pastor of the First Christian Reformed Church of Sheldon, Iowa.

A penny a page — and worth much more! This booklet gives a Biblically-oriented approach to the Christian life. What ought to be the Christian's attitude toward the world? World flight and worldly indulgence are both answers — and bad ones at that! Vos gives the Biblical answer. He writes, for example: "Many of those who today are so zealous for human ordinances about things indifferent fall into the error of the Galatians, who supposed that the Christian life is begun in the Spirit, but perfected in the flesh (Gal. 3:3), begun by the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit, but completed by human efforts, actions and abstinences" (p. 29).

Perhaps this would be a valuable book for small discussion groups, besides being valuable for our general reading.

THE OUTLOOK is indebted to Rev. Jerome M. Julien, pastor of the First Christian Reformed Church of Sheldon, Iowa, for having provided this Index to the contents of its 1981 issues.

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