

THE OUTLOOK

DEVOTED TO THE EXPOSITION AND DEFENSE OF THE REFORMED FAITH

MARCH 1982



**THE MISSIONARY APPROACH
FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY OR SECRECY?
THE BIBLE AND THE FUTURE**

THE CRUCIFIED CHRIST UTTERLY REJECTED AND DESPISED

John Blankespoor

"There they crucified him" (Luke 23:33).

"The rulers even sneered at him" (v. 35).

"The soldiers also came up and mocked him" (v. 36).

"Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads" (Matt. 27:38).

"In the same way the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders mocked him" (v. 41).

"In the same way the robbers who were crucified with him heaped insults on him" (v. 44).

"But all those who knew him stood at a distance watching these things" (Luke 23:49).

Try to form a mental picture of this entire scene and history. Recall the course of events with Jesus — no sleep at all during the previous night, after the opposite of rest in the awful experience in Gethsemane. The disciples had forsaken him. Then there followed the dishonest trial and condemnation. Men spit in his face, which must already have been partly covered with the dried blood of Gethsemane; they slapped him, whipped His bare back and pressed down the thorny crown upon His head. He was mocked by the soldiers. Then at Calvary they pounded their big crude nails through His hands and feet. (Compare that with the prick of a hypodermic needle which even frightens some people.)

The worst of the experience we can't see, the spiritual suffering of the soul of the Son of God. If we could see it, or even imagine it, our words would be inadequate to begin to describe it. Jesus was indeed "the Man of Sorrows," "acquainted with grief" and "rejected of men." Isaiah (ch. 53) says further that "there was no beauty that we should desire him" when we see him, which might suggest that at this stage people didn't even recognize Him.

The Scriptures cited above describe the reactions of the people. We notice at least four groups of them.

Some wagged their heads, meaning that they were convinced that He was not the Messiah, but an imposter, a fraud. Others threw back at Him His own words regarding the building of the temple, not understanding the Lord at all and distorting everything that He had said. When people twist your words, that hurts. He had claimed that He trusted in God. They argued that He really did not, because if He did, God would help and deliver Him. He had claimed that He was the Son of God. That too, they argued, was plainly a lie, because if He were the Son He would come down from the cross. Ridicule and hatred were heaped upon Him. What king was this, hanging on a cross? What kind of Savior was He, claiming to be the Messiah and unable even to deliver Himself?

Did no one "take sides" with Him? All we see is some acquaintances who stood afar off, watching what was happening. They loved Him enough to want to see what happened, but were too ashamed and afraid to come near Him.

Consider what men, mere human beings, were doing to God, the Creator of the world, come in the flesh. Mankind didn't want Him. "He came unto his own, but his own received him not," said John.

Would people of our twentieth century have reacted differently if He had come in this way into the world of our time? Considering the number of people who celebrate Christmas, we might expect Him to receive a royal welcome. But would He have been welcomed? The Scriptures teach us that He would not. Man by nature hates God. Jesus had said that the world had hated Him and that it would also hate His people. God, in His love, had come into the world to save sinners. He had come to man, doomed because of his own sin, to be to him "the Way, the Truth and the Life." But man, characteristically, as we read in this story, rejected — and rejects Him.

After such inexcusable conduct on the part of men, we might expect either of two things to happen: Either the day of judgment might immediately

come, or Jesus might give up the whole program of salvation. Who would want to save this kind of people? Neither of these two happened. Why not? There is only one answer — the love of God was so great and deep that He would save such sinful people.

Christ's course as Savior required indescribable suffering of body and soul. We little understand His incarnation. Human language is inadequate to describe and explain this miracle of all miracles. The inadequacy of the human understanding and human language becomes greater when we get a glimpse of the suffering of Him who was God come in the flesh. Our pictures can't portray it; our words can't describe it; our minds can't comprehend it. One of the old Dutch psalms says, "Wij zien het maar doorgronden't niet" (translated, "We see it, but don't comprehend it").

Wasn't the sin of these people much worse than that of Korah, Dathan and Abiram? Wouldn't we therefore expect the earth to open and swallow them, as it had those earlier offenders? No! This is not the judgment day. This is the day and work of the great atonement. Christ, ridiculed, abused, condemned and crucified, was silent. "As a sheep that is led to the slaughter, He opened not His mouth" (Isaiah 53). What Christ suffered was the suffering of hell in the place of His people. He suffered as the "Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." Why did Christ do it? Because we and these people are so lovable and attractive in God's sight? Certainly not! God loves His people even while they are sinners. Why? We do not know. God revealed an infinite love that was so deep and persistent that He sent His only Son to be despised, hated, rejected, to suffer and die for us. And if He so loved us at this time, will He not freely give us all things with Him (Rom. 8:32)? If the love of God was shown to be so great at this time, will it ever weaken, or disappear? Never. He will and does love His own until the end of their lives and until the end of time. Nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ, Paul assures us. That is our comfort. One purpose of observing the Lenten season is to encourage us to grow in the knowledge of the love of Christ and to enjoy its comfort.

God also wants us to love Him in response. We know how much He wants us to love Him. We are reminded of that when we hear the law read every Sunday. As He in His infinite love gave all for us, He wants us, in response, to give our all, the all of mere mortal beings, but now saved sinners and new creatures in Christ. . . .

When we recall what people did to the very Son of God, and how He, our Savior, persisted in His love to go the way to Calvary, we sense more deeply the meaning of the question

*Alas and did my Savior bleed,
And did my Sovereign die?
Would He devote that sacred head
For such a worm as I?*

The answer to the hymn's question is that He did. What a God, what a Savior and what a love! ●

THE OUTLOOK

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"And the three companies blew the trumpets . . . and held THE TORCHES in their left hands, and THE TRUMPETS in their right hands . . . and they cried, The sword of Jehovah and of Gideon" (Judges 7:20).

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the missionary approach to muslims:

L. BLOSSER ON "CONTEXTUALIZATION"

DANGERS TO THE GOSPEL MISSIONS

The missionary's effort to bring the gospel to the world may encounter two especially formidable kinds of obstacles. One of them is the hostility of the people to whom he goes which may take the form of persecution. The other, often more subtle, but just as dangerous, is the pressures on the missionary to compromise the gospel message in the interests of making it more acceptable to the people he addresses.

Current efforts to bring the gospel to the Muslim world face both kinds of obstacles. The intolerance of many Islamic societies and countries toward Christian missions is well-known. At a conference on missions to Muslims held early in November at the Reformed Bible College our attention was repeatedly directed to the second kind of danger to missions. Especially Rev. Leon F. Blosser, a Reformed Baptist veteran of 13 years of missionary service among Muslims in the Persian Gulf area, and currently headmaster of a Christian school at Carlisle, Pennsylvania, called attention to what he saw as "alarming trends in Christian witness to Muslims."

Warfield's Warning

He began his address by alluding to a speech of Dr. B. B. Warfield to a group of prospective missionaries printed in the July 1898 issue of the *Presbyterian Quarterly*. The famous Presbyterian professor warned against five dangers that will destroy a missionary and his church. One of those dangers is that the missionary himself is converted to the religion of his hearers, the danger "that in striving to commend Christianity to the heathen and to remove their stubborn and abounding difficulties in accepting it, we simply explain Christianity away." War-

field continued, "I have met more than one missionary from Mohammedan lands, for example, who had learned to state the doctrine of the Trinity 'so genially and so winningly' (as they express it), that it roused little or no opposition in the Mohammedan mind. And when I heard how they state it, I did not wonder; they had so stated it as to leave the idea of the Trinity out. The method of conversion by concession is really, at bottom, an attempt to deceive men into a profession of Christianity; to make them believe that Christianity is not what it appears to be, and does not involve in its profession *all* that it seems; that it is much 'easier to take' than men have been accustomed to think."*

Missionary Blosser saw this danger which was so clearly described by Dr. Warfield almost a century ago as a peril to especially missionary labors among Muslims, as an increasing threat also to such missionary labors today. He saw it appearing especially in a popular missionary policy which is commonly called "contextualization."

The Contextualization Problem

Missionary conferences at Lausanne, Switzerland, in 1974 and at Willowbank, Bermuda, in 1978 focussed attention on how we must deal with cultural barriers in trying to bring the gospel. "How can I, who was born and brought up in one culture, take the truth out of the Bible which was addressed to people in a second culture, and communicate it to a people who belong to a third culture . . . ?" And, how can converts relate to their own culture? The word "contextualization" was used to cover the attempted answers to these questions.

Every missionary, setting out to bring the gospel to people of a different country and culture from his own, has to make a number of adjustments (just as any immigrant does). One of his first and biggest

*Selected Shorter Writings of Benjamin B. Warfield, Vol. II, pp. 497, 506, 507 — Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co. 1976.

problems is likely to be that of learning to understand and speak a different language. The question the missionary has to face is how far he should go in making adjustments to this different culture. On that point missionary opinions and practices have varied widely. Mr. Blosser pointed out that while some missionaries have tried to make as few changes as possible even "going out with the English Bible," others have swung to the opposite extreme of assuming everything the missionary has to say can be put into the cultural forms of the person to whom he is going. Although the Willowbank report noted the danger of compromise of the gospel when this adjustment was carried too far and acknowledged the authority and inspiration of the Bible, the enthusiasts who follow its theme of "contextualization" have not escaped that danger. One has to distinguish, as some seem disinclined to do, between changes that concern only unimportant matters of custom and those which would alter the gospel message. As the missionary observed, "There is a vast difference between deciding to drop or alter the trinitarian formula in baptism or redefine or eliminate the sacrament of the Lord's table, and considering whether or not the congregation should sit on the floor or on benches, sing eastern or western tunes, or use a particular form of architecture in building a place of worship!" Between such extremes, the speaker saw the proper course of the missionary who "in mastering the language, strives to selectively adopt customs and elements of lifestyle into which can be poured content consistent with a Christian world view."

Keeping and Bringing the Gospel Content

Some have argued that translating the Bible from one language to another, seeking "dynamic equivalents" in the other language, should also be carried over into all of these cultural matters. Blosser pointed out that the aim of the translator has to be to faithfully convey the content of the message from one language into the other, not alter it. Faith always has content. "He that cometh to God must believe that He is" (Heb. 11:6) — one has to believe that proposition. Christianity is not just a nebulous feeling of love. Man was created in God's image, with a mind and ability to deal with reality as it is. But he also has a will, which, since the fall, forces the mind to distort any knowledge of God which it receives (Rom. 1:18-23). All non-Biblically oriented thought becomes an attempt to turn the truth of God into a lie. All non-Christian religion (or culture) at its best is an exercise in *suppressing* the knowledge of God. It is *not* neutral!

A Movement Against Doctrine

Dr. Geerhardus Vos in 1905 spoke of "the dislike of dogma and theology which is so widespread in our days" and the "veritable dread of everything that is not immediately practical or experimental." Mr. Blosser sees that dislike of doctrine sweeping through the churches of our time and more particularly their missionary thinking in the movement

for "contextualization" which threatens to destroy the Christian faith by relativizing it.

Missionary Destruction of the Gospel

He mentioned some disturbing examples of missionary leaders whom he saw moving in this direction. He cited the recent Baker-published book, *Islam — A Survey of the Muslim Faith*, co-authored by George Fry and James King as revealing "a complete reversal of opinion — at least on Mr. Fry's part — from evangelicalism to relativism."

Mr. Fry (also a speaker at this RBC conference) in 1969 had warned that "From its inception . . . Islam has been Christianity's most dangerous doctrinal challenge. It offers 'another Christ,' 'another gospel,' another way of salvation." In this new book, on the contrary, we find him holding that there is no difference in meaning between the Islamic "Allah" and the Christian concept represented by "God" (p. 48). In the same vein Fry and King in this new book state that "The posture of evangelicals is that the Christian mission is not to communicate a culture (usually Western), or a creed, or a church, or a moral code and commandments, or customs. Rather dialogue-witness for them is to share a person, Jesus Christ, who has been for them a transforming power and a Savior-Friend. What the consequences of Christ will be for Muslims, in terms of their culture, creed, mosques, codes, commandments, and customs, evangelicals do not pretend to know. There have been spontaneous Jesus Muslim movements in both Anatolia and West Africa; but no Westerner knows, or can even pretend to know, what the person and power of Jesus will mean for Muslims" (pp. 137, 138).

Another similar missionary writer, Phil Parshall, in his book *New Paths in Muslim Evangelism* (Baker Book House — 1981, p. 195) suggests that since baptism is offensive to Muslims missionaries consider substituting something else for it.

If the Christian missionary, in effort to accommodate Muslim prejudices, is to discard all creeds, church, moral code and commandments, baptism, which the Lord commanded, and, while talking to them about Jesus, has no way of knowing what that is to mean to them, what does he have left to communicate? Jesus said, "If you love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15), and John warned, "He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him" (1 John 2:4). Blosser suggested that if the evangelical no longer knows or pretends to know, as Fry and King now say, "what the consequences of Christ will be for the Muslims, in terms of their creed, mosques, codes, commandments" he has become indistinguishable from a liberal.

"The time has come to sound an alarm that will alert pastors and missionaries to the dangers inherent in the contextualization movement. Let us return to the faith once delivered to the saints and continue as that great apostle to Islam, Samuel Zwemer, admonished us. 'Preach to the Moslem, not as a Moslem, hut as a man — a sinner in need of a Savior.'"



Peter De Jong

Should the Church Know What Happens to its Offerings

FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY OR SECRECY?

Circumventing a Synod Decision

Preparatory for the annual June meeting of the Christian Reformed churches' synod, the agenda of materials to be considered and decided is mailed out and put into the hands of every office-holder in the churches several weeks before the meeting. In 1978 the synod received an overture asking that the financial reports included in that agenda be made more complete especially in publicizing the salaries and fringe benefits which each agency paid its employees. Noting, as the advisory committee reported, that there had previously been repeated requests by the constituency paying the quota to make this information public, the synod instructed "all those agencies requesting quota support to include their salary and fringe benefit schedules in their annual reports, and these reports be included in the agenda." The substantive ground which the synod gave for this decision was "The constituency paying the quota is entitled to this information" (*Acts 1978*, pp. 94, 95).

It is remarkable that the *1979 Agenda*, instead of containing these more detailed financial reports which the 1978 synod had ordered, had lost almost all of such material. Instead of being included in the regular agenda with the committee reports such material has now been collected and issued as a *Financial and Business Supplement to the Agenda*. The 1981 Supplement is an impressive, well-organized and informative booklet, and was undoubtedly useful to those who had opportunity to read it. More significant for the financial policy of our denomination than the contents of that booklet, however, is the fact that instead of being sent out to the 9500 local church consistory members who ordinarily receive the agenda several weeks before the synod meets, this production was prepared only for the 156 delegates who attend the synod. An introductory note states "This Supplemental Agenda or any portion thereof is available to all of our consistories upon request." Notice that immediately after the synod had decided that the agenda financial reports

should be made more informative because "the constituency paying the quota is entitled to this information," the preparers of the agenda moved to very effectively keep all such financial information out of the hands of most of the 9500 consistory members! Could the purpose of synod decision be more completely thwarted than this one was?

In fairness we must observe that although general budget materials have disappeared from the regular synod agenda, in one instance a little of this material does reappear in the *Acts* of the 1981 Synod in a three page Appendix on pages 391-393 entitled "Report on Salary Schedules Denominational Agencies Uniform Salary Policy." From reading this report the ordinary office-holder in any of the churches may learn for the first time that he is paying the top "executives" of his denomination a base salary of somewhere between \$29,300 and \$43,900. To this amount there must be added, as we read on page 393, a number of "non-salary benefits." Six such benefits are listed, but their percentages are left blank. To discover those percentages one must turn to the *Financial and Business Supplement* and there learn that in the case of "denominational services" they amount to

Social Security taxes, as required by law 6% of salaries.

Workmen's Compensation insurance, as required by law .5%

Hospital and medical insurance 4%

Group life and long-term disability, the premiums for which are about 1% of salaries

Pension contributions 7% of salaries

Paid vacations 9% of salaries.

These fringe benefits add up to an additional 27.5% of the salaries. The ordinary church office-holder may read about these matters in the *Acts* which come into his hands a few months after the synod has approved of them. These important matters of the churches' financial policy have been approved by the action of the synod, but that approval, if it has

not been gotten in complete secrecy, has been obtained with about as little exposure to the knowledge of the ordinary church member and even the ordinary consistory member as would be possible.

The Threats of Government Correction and Public Exposure

It is ironic that this movement into secrecy about denominational finances has come at a time when the raising and use of funds by churches and other religious organizations have been getting an extraordinary amount of government and public attention. We read of law suits against cult leaders charging them with appropriation of church funds for private use. We read of suits against church organizations alleged to have been established in order to avoid payment of taxes. In the November 6, 1981 *Christianity Today* an editorial reviewed the recent history of growing public concern about the way in which charitable and religious organizations have been raising and using their money. It recalled that four years ago a bill, HR41, was introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives. That legislation, it seems, aimed to correct abuses in the handling of money by non-profit organizations by placing them all under some far-reaching government regulation. There were protests against this extensive government interference in religious matters and the bill failed to pass. The editorial recalled that evangelicals in congress at that time warned evangelical religious leaders that unless they took the initiative in trying to correct the abuses in the handling of such funds, the next such bill to come before the congress would be likely to pass. The threat of such government regulation moved a number of Christian leaders in 1979 to organize what was called the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability. This is a voluntary organization of some 185 para-church and denominational organizations who seek to police their handling of funds among themselves. The editorial observed that the efforts of this council had been largely successful.

Another organization that has moved to expose and try to correct abuses in the raising and handling of money for charitable and religious purposes is the council of Better Business Bureaus, Incorporated. It publishes a quarterly update on charitable, educational and religious organizations under the title, "Give, But Give Wisely." It studies the policies of various organizations in the light of its standards regarding public disclosure, governing bodies, financial accountability, fund-raising practices, solicitations and educational materials, and lists those which comply or partially comply with those standards and those which have failed to answer inquiry about their practices.

It ought not to be necessary for the government or secular business bureaus to educate churches on what constitutes honesty in handling of their funds. But the fact that church practices have aroused their interest and concern in these matters should prompt us to be at least as concerned about establishing and maintaining standards of accountability in dealing with church offerings as they are.

Requirements of Biblically Reformed Church Order

Our Lord placed the responsibility for leading and governing His church on the elders (or, to use the Greek word, "presbyters"), so that this is the organizing principle of Reformed or Presbyterian church government. They were given authority to rule, (Mt. 16:19; 18:18; Heb. 13:17) but at the same time cautioned repeatedly against any tendency on the part of any of them to seek domination over the rest (Matthew 20:20-28; cf. 1 Pet. 5:1-3). This is reflected in Article 95 of our Church Order; "No church shall in any way lord it over another church, and no church office-bearer shall lord it over another office-bearer." It is also reflected in the principle stated in article 27a that the authority of consistories is "original, that of major assemblies being delegated." It is this principle that is observed as the annual synod's agenda is put in the hands of every consistory member before the synod meets so that his representatives there may handle the church business on his behalf as much as possible with his knowledge and support. That principle is being violated when information about the churches' financial activity is kept out of his hands.

Consider what happens at each of our churches' annual congregational meeting. Among the items of business there is an annual budget, prepared by the consistory and submitted to the congregation for its approval. Included in that budget are such items as the pastor's salary. That, as well as other local intended expenditures, may get considerable discussion before it is accepted (or rejected). In that same budget there is a large item called "quotas," which is usually passed without any question, without anyone in the group, including the consistory members, even knowing what kind of expenditures are being approved, or that the salaries of denominational "executives," so automatically approved, may well be double that which is approved (or rejected) for the local pastor. (The point is not whether these figures are reasonable or excessive, but that the congregation is kept ignorant of them.)

Where in our Reformed Church Order is there really room for denominational "executives" who "run" the churches' business, increasingly without even the knowledge of those they are supposed to be representing? The denominational quotas, as we stated long ago when the old misnomer "assessments" was discarded as inappropriate, are in principle "recommendations." The consistory has the right and duty to know what they are before it can conscientiously recommend them.

Not only does the consistory have the right and duty to know these matters, but, as the 1978 Synod decision recognized, all of the members also have the right to know and be assured of what their offerings are being used to support. "The constituency paying the quota is entitled to this information." The arrangement whereby the members are required to pay but kept in ignorance of what their executive experts do with the money may be compatible with a hierarchical, Roman-Catholic church organization, but it cannot possibly be harmonized

with a Reformed Church order. A Biblically Reformed order requires that the people know what they and their representatives are doing in the Lord's service.

Corrective Measures

What can be done to correct this intolerable secrecy which increasingly surrounds our denominational finances? One important step in that direction would be an overture asking the 1982 Synod to require that the decision of 1978 which has been so effectively circumvented be carried out, that the *Financial and Business Supplement to the Agenda* be sent at least to every consistory in the denomination several weeks before the synod meets at the same time as the regular agendas are distributed, and that more significant parts of this material including salary scales be put in the regular agenda for each consistory member.

In addition to and beyond such a corrective overture, we need to recover the Biblical perspective which teaches us to give intelligently as part of our spiritual service of the Lord. The instructions of the Apostle Paul in the 9th and 10th chapters of his Second Letter to the Corinthians are especially illuminating in this respect. Relating the Corinthians' giving to supply the needs of fellow Christians with the most basic doctrines of the Bible, the Lord's atonement for us, he urged them to show that "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ" (8:9) had produced a corresponding grace within them manifested in this giving for fellow Christians (9:12-15). Accordingly in the management of such matters Paul sought to provide "for things honorable not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men" (8:21). ●

**Note that on pp. 391-393 of the Acts of 1981 such a report on salary schedules does appear although it is not in the Agenda. There is no apparent reason why such reports should not be included in the regular agenda.*

John H. Elenbaas

THE LORD'S SUBSTITUTE DISCIPLINE

I Cor. 11:29-32: *"For he that eateth and drinketh, eateth and drinketh judgment unto himself, if he discern not the body. For this cause many among you are weak and sickly, and not a few sleep. But if we discern ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world."*

A few weeks ago while my wife and I were enjoying a pizza in a restaurant, there were two large birthday parties going on at nearby tables. One group was total disaster, with children running around, screaming, throwing food at each other, while their parents sitting at a separate table didn't even seem to notice. The other group was well be-

haved, with the children doing nothing more drastic than blowing their horns and making other sounds of enjoyment. I wanted so to go over to the only mother in that group and ask her her secret.

Sometimes we wonder how some children survive parents who neglect their discipline so noticeably. Yet a surprising number of them do survive and turn out quite well as adults. Where did they learn self-discipline? Probably they learned it at school, or from a good youth leader, a coach, or even in the army. The ideal is that children learn self-discipline at home. But there are substitutes that do sometimes work in the place of parental neglect.

What happens when people don't learn *spiritual* self-discipline in their home and in their church? What happens when the elders and the pastor neglect their duty for fear of men? Is that church necessarily doomed to extinction? We would think so,

yet some churches embarrass us with their seeming vitality, when we would predict certain disaster on account of their neglect of discipline. How can we account for that?

I don't want to underrate the importance of discipline in the church. In fact its importance is underlined in the passage above. It is so important that when we fail to do it, Jesus in his love for his erring church steps in to work the same result, but in a very painful way.

First Church of Corinth had fallen seriously in her discipline. Party division, incest, pride, selfish use of Christian liberty, heresy in regard to the resurrection, and thoughtless observance of the Lord's Supper were all permitted. Yet this was the same group that had been gathered by Paul's preaching the gospel there after he had been encouraged by the Lord in a vision saying, "I have much people in this city." Acts 18:10. How did this church ever survive such neglect of discipline long enough for Paul to even write this corrective letter? I Cor. 11:30 points to a substitute discipline in the hands of the Lord — a drastic substitute to be sure, but effective nevertheless — an extraordinary measure of illness and death amongst them. "For this cause many among you are weak and sickly, and not a few sleep."

It would be tempting to apply this to those individuals guilty of the sin of thoughtless eating and drinking at the Lord's table. After all, doesn't verse 29 tell us that he eats and drinks "judgment unto himself?" This is the way many interpreters see it.

In my pastoral visits to the sick and dying, I am very hesitant ever to make a direct connection with some special sin that brought sickness or deaths even if it looks like a natural result. Sick and dying people usually are struggling hard enough with self-accusation as it is without someone adding to their burden by suggesting that the Lord is judging them. I even wince a little when using the prayer in back of our hymn book where speaking of those in poverty, imprisonment, physical illness, or spiritual distress; it asks, "Grant that their chastening may lead them to acknowledge their sins and to amend their lives."

I believe this hesitancy to make direct connections in individual cases is supported by Scripture. Our Lord Jesus warned his hearers against thinking that those who were killed by a crumbling tower were greater sinners than others, but said that they should *all* repent or likewise perish. Luke 13:4, 5. The effect of this tragedy was intended to be communal, not individual.

We need not look far in this very passage of I Corinthians to see that Paul was not thinking so much about sickness and death as God's discipline for the individual as for the *body* of Christ at Corinth.

Notice first that he calls the death of some "sleep" — a word reserved for the death of believers. It is hardly fitting to describe the discipline of the individual who died. It is too late for him to profit. But it is very fitting to speak of those whose death is being used by the Lord as a loving discipline for the whole body of Christ at Corinth.

We also notice the interesting choice of word for what the Lord is doing with these painful judgments

in verse 32 — "discipline," or "chastening," literally "child-rearing." This language makes such illness and death not a wrathful visit upon those who abuse the Lord's table, but a loving formation of a better character.

And see how clearly the Lord's goal of His substitute discipline is stated, "That we may not be condemned with the world." What could be worse than being left to the results of our own neglect of discipline? A gracious Lord steps in with something to take its place.

The sudden translation to "we" in 31 and 32 shows that this is something with application beyond Corinth, in fact, a characteristic way in which the Lord works in His church.

The Lord does not quickly give up on a church that is disobedient in discipline. She may indeed be worthy of eternal condemnation with the rest of the world. But He who loved her and gave Himself for her has another way of achieving the healing of His precious body where she neglects her duty. An extraordinary measure of sickness and death in a congregation has a way of cleansing the body. Her divisions can be healed by the mutual concern generated for her sick and grieving and their families. All are reminded of the fragility of life and the need of depending on the Lord more. Unbelievers are driven off by the obvious lack of material advantage in being part of such an afflicted group. Why not go where there is a better percentage?

Some years ago our congregation was shocked by a very public offense involving people in leading positions. The assault on the faith of the youth especially and on our unity as we differed on how to deal with it, were very threatening. However, at almost the same time a young man in the congregation was struck with a severe illness which kept him poised between life and death in the intensive care unit of a hospital for months.

Were he or his family being punished? These were about the last ones you would think deserved it. Yet looking back on the whole experience, many have agreed that this was used by the Lord to hold us together as a congregation and bring us a measure of healing as we and the whole community rallied behind them in prayer. What else would bring an entire public high school together in a prayer service during school hours?

We cannot predict when the Lord will apply such painful measures for the healing of a congregation. We can, however, learn that sometimes our neglect of discipline brings into action another kind of discipline which in the hands of the Lord will do what we failed to do ourselves. The Lord does not quickly give over a negligent church to the judgment of the world. We can thank Him for His patient love, but why invite such painful measures by our neglect?C

Editor's note: Rev. John H. Elenbaas is the pastor of the Second Christian Reformed Church of Wellsburg, Iowa. Corroborating Rev. J. Elenbaas' observations about the Lord's discipline where the church neglects that duty are a number of the Lord's admonitions and warnings to the seven churches in Revelation 2 and 3 — "Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; be zealous therefore, and repent" (3:19).

Letter to the Ephesians

CHRIST AND THE CHURCH: THE PATTERN FOR THE HOME

Lesson 13

Ephesians 5:22-33

Wives and Husbands

This paragraph has received more unfavorable attention in our day than any other part of the Epistle to the Ephesians. Paul is dealing with a relationship which is undergoing great changes in our age. What is the proper relationship between husbands and wives? Our time prefers to look upon that relationship as one of equality, as two equals bound together by voluntary ties. This is the democratic ideal and gets away from the so-called antiquated view which is still found in certain places in human society today, but not in enlightened circles!

Paul begins this section in a way that jolts many today. He tells wives to be in subjection to their own husbands! He has been maligned as one who is a woman hater. Was he not unmarried? Is he speaking the language of his own day and is he not adopting the common views of his society? The answer to these and similar questions gets to the heart of the "problem." It is essentially a question of the view of Scripture one possesses. Is Paul giving his own view of these matters or is this paragraph also inspired by the Spirit of God? If one does not hold to the latter position, nothing in the Pauline writings is normative for the man of today. He does not only speak of this matter in this paragraph but he refers to it again and again in his various letters to churches and individuals. It is, therefore, a very important matter. It must be properly understood in order to have the proper view of the most basic of human relationships!

"Be Subject"

Wives are, therefore, to be subject to their husbands. Why? Because he is the wiser of the two? Because he always has the better judgment? Of course not! Why? Because God says so! Men may think themselves wiser than God and reverse His order, but they will pay the price! His Word stands. This *subjection* is the stumbling block for many. But, the Apostle makes it very clear in the following verses how the rule of the one and the subjection of the other are to be understood. Here he simply says that she is to be subject to her husband as unto the Lord. The husband is standing

in the place of the Lord — he has received an *office*. He will be responsible to the Lord for the way he governs his house. Let the wife therefore not be blinded by all the inadequacies of her husband, but let her look on him as representing the Lord in her home.

The Husband Is Head

He emphasizes this relationship even more in verse 23. He says very clearly that the husband is the head of the wife! That is the reason she must be subject. This is the way in which the Creator has formed the first home. Adam was created first — then Eve. Some may not like this divine arrangement, but, who can argue that that is not the manner in which the Bible always presents the matter? To make it clear that this is not a relationship under which the one suffers hardship, Paul immediately adds: "as Christ also is the head of the church." If there would be a different relationship between Christ and the church than the one spoken of here, Christ would be dethroned and the church would be lost! So important is it, therefore, to see the husband-wife relationship in the proper light. The wife is not called to servile subjection, but natural subjection. Not as a slave, but in love. Christ is the Savior of the body, the church. He, though the head of the body, is seeking its welfare. If the church should seek a place equal to that of Christ, she would destroy herself! The church must be subject to Christ in order to obtain salvation. This is not a galling yoke, no, His commands are not grievous. So are the wives to be subject to their own husbands "in everything." This last phrase does not mean slavish subjection, regardless of what he may require, but, rather, subjection as the common pattern of life.

Husbands Commanded to Love

Husbands are commanded to love their wives! Can we love at command? Yes, and if a husband no longer loves his wife he is disobedient! This apostolic statement presupposes the Biblical view of love. Not as modernity would have it — involving only the emotions; but a love which is deep and involves the whole person. Husbands love your wives in that way. They are herein also to follow the pattern shown them by Christ. He loved the church! What kind of love was that? Sacrificial! He gave His life for her. That is the way husbands are to love their wives and it will then not be difficult for the wife to be subject to her husband!

The metaphor which the Apostle uses in this section cannot be pressed in all its various parts. This is true concerning the words we find in verses 26 and 27. The main point of the illustration may never be lost from sight, but all of the details cannot be applied to both Christ's relation to the church and the marriage relationship among men. Christ has given Himself for the church so that He might set her apart (sanctify), and that He might cleanse her "by the washing of water with the word." Without doubt a reference is here made to baptism. However, baptism in association with the Word! Let no one derive a faulty view of baptism from this verse, but let everyone see it in its context. By baptism He indeed cleanses, i.e., baptism is a symbol of this cleansing. However, that baptism never stands alone but is united to the word and in that way the cleansing goes on! It is a life-long process. In this way the Lord will finally present a church to Himself which has neither spot nor wrinkle, but is a glorious and cleansed church. The people of his day understood Paul when he referred to these things, especially the Jews among them. However, they must also have wondered at the language of the Apostle when he speaks as he does here. It was customary among the Jews that a bride would *prepare herself* for her wedding day. But, Paul says that Christ prepares His bride! The metaphor, therefore, is altered a little in these two verses, but that is common in the Pauline writings. What illustration shall he choose which will cover both the divine and human relations? His emphasis here is on the fact that Christ cares for His church and sees to it that that church shall be holy and without blemish. Now, "even so ought husbands also to love their own wives as their own bodies." So close is the bond between Christ and His church and between husband and wife that he is able to say that the husband who so loves his wife — loves himself! Where do the duties lie — on the side of the wife or on that of her husband? On neither, or both, because it is a work of love!

Of course, no one hates his own flesh. (There are too many who conceitedly love it too much) Each person, — of course, seeks the welfare of his own body. Otherwise that body becomes sick and malfunctions. Therefore a person nourishes and cherishes it. Christ nourishes and cherishes His church. Seeing that we are members of His body we must emulate Him. We must, as husbands, bestow that loving care on our wives which Christ bestows on His church. Then our relationship to Christ is shown in clear light.

Beginning at the Creation — One Flesh

The Apostle now goes all the way back to the time of creation to show that the things he has been teaching concerning the true relationship of husbands and wives goes all the way back to the beginning. The command was there given that a man (and woman?) should leave father and mother and cling to his wife when they have been joined in marriage. Naturally, this was a command to future generations because Adam had no father or mother to leave. The emphasis falls on the unity of the two

who have entered the marriage state. They shall become one flesh. They shall be one in mind and in heart (how shall two walk together except they be agreed?) but there shall also be a sexual union — a union of bodies. All of a man's attention must be focused on his wife. Even that close relation which he had to his father and mother may not stand in the way of his relationship to his wife. He must forsake the former to cling to the latter. This is the way marriage was intended to be from the beginning! This is the way marriage is renewed through our union with the Christ of God! Christian marriage is a symbol of the union of Christ and His church. Therefore a religiously mixed marriage is wrong! How can an unbelieving husband be a symbol of Christ? How can an unbelieving woman be the symbol of His church? Mixed marriage is, therefore, basically wrong — and it is not wrong, first of all, because it doesn't work!

A Mystery — Applied

"This mystery is great: but I speak in regard of Christ and of the church." This seems to be a strange statement in the middle of this discussion. We also have to be careful that we do not give a wrong or fanciful meaning to these words, as has often been done. In the first place, by the term *mystery* Paul always means that which had not been revealed before but now is revealed. He is here, I believe, emphasizing the same thing I emphasized earlier, viz., that the metaphor is insufficient to cover all of the various parts of the relationship of Christ and the church and of husband and wife. The marvelous love which Christ exhibited to His church cannot be equalled, but it is the goal for which we are to strive. Even though he is speaking regarding Christ and the church, nevertheless, husbands are to love their wives according to the pattern shown them by Christ. That love must be deep and it must be self-sacrificing. There must be no doubt that the man has this kind of a love for his wife. On the other side, the wife must see to it that she fears or has respect for her husband. This latter, of course, does not rule out the love she must have for him, nor could his love for her rule out the respect he must have for his wife.

Wherever these rules of marriage are not recognized or obeyed, marriage fails to achieve its purpose. We must again get back to the Biblical view of the true marriage bond, or our problems will multiply in this important area of life. The place of the one is not devalued for the sake of the other, as is so often assumed today. Only when we follow the teachings of Scripture will we have the fullness of life.

Questions for discussion:

- 1- Does this paragraph in Ephesians have anything to say concerning the matter of Women in Office? If so, what does it teach concerning it?
- 2- What does the "headship" of the husband mean? Is there the danger that this shall become a dictatorship?

- 3- What is wrong with coming to a decision together, as husband and wife, after full discussion? Do you think this paragraph forbids this?
- 4- Can we love at command? What counsel would you give someone who states that he or she simply no longer loves the other party in the marriage relationship?
- 5- Do mixed marriages sometimes "work." Does this mean that it isn't always wrong?
- 6- The Bible deals with the marriage relationship in many places. Why have we had many committees to study what would be proper guidelines for marriage? Why did we need many committees to study the matter of divorce?

OF CHILDREN AND SLAVES

Lesson 14

Ephesians 6:1-9

At the beginning of this last chapter the writer singles out certain groups in the church at Ephesus for whom he has a special word. This implies, of course, that these (children, slaves, masters) were in the church service where this apostolic letter was read. He often singles out particular groups in the churches to which he writes. *All* the members of the church were expected to be present when the great event of receiving a letter of Paul occurred. So it ought to be throughout time and throughout the church. The gospel speaks to each one and no one has a right to be absent where the Spirit of God speaks.

"Children Obey Your Parents in the Lord"

Paul addresses the children with a command which is derived from the fifth commandment and he quotes that commandment in the second verse. A child is to be obedient to its parents. This is the teaching of nature and all of life. The child may not be in the position in which it commands! The child is in need of being led and of being instructed. It must therefore listen to those who are older and wiser. But, the children of believers are not only taught by nature, they are especially taught by the Word of God. They must not obey because no other behavior is possible for them, but they must obey willingly and gladly "in the Lord." He requires it and what He requires is right.

In the second verse the Apostle quotes the first part of the fifth commandment. This commandment does not speak first of all of obeying father and mother, but of honoring them. This is an important distinction. At no time does the child arrive at the age when he is not to honor his parents, but the time for obeying them is limited. Honoring them is, therefore, of a more fundamental nature. It will include the obedience which is required in the early years of life. By bringing the proper honor the child gives evidence of a true love for his parents. And . . . that is the heart of the law! Obedience may be because of fear of the consequence of disobedience, etc., but honor reveals love and devotion.

"Commandment with Promise"

This is the first commandment with promise, says Paul. Is that entirely correct? Does not the second commandment already include a promise that He will show loving kindness to thousands of those who love Him and keep His commandments? Different explanations have been given of this seeming error. We should remember that the promise found in the second commandment is general in nature and could have been attached to any of the ten commandments. Secondly, he is not necessarily using the term "first" in a numerical sense. Here a promise is attached to a specific commandment which has meaning for the keeping of this commandment only.

The promise is now quoted: that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth. However, this promise has also given difficulty to many. It surely is not true that every obedient child will live to a ripe old age? Would that not be the natural meaning of the wording of this promise? In dealing with the ten commandments it certainly becomes evident to everyone that a key sin is mentioned but that each one of these commandments is much broader in scope than the particular sin which is mentioned. The Heidelberg Catechism makes this very clear in its treatment of each one of the commandments of the decalogue. It then becomes clear that the fifth commandment does not only deal with the relationship of parent-child, but also of government-governed, of employer-employee etc. When one considers how far this commandment reaches, the promise included in this commandment becomes clear. If this commandment is transgressed in all the various relationships of life, there would be utter chaos! This would make life impossible. Only where there is a well-ordered life, in obedience to this commandment, can a *people* look for a lengthy life in the land which the Lord gives to them. A home, a society, a government can endure only where this commandment is honored!

Fathers' God-Given Trust

The fifth commandment speaks to parents as well as to children. It is true that the children are to obey, but the parents must also insist on this obedience and make it as easy as possible for the child to be obedient. The author addresses the fathers in particular. They are the ones who are responsible for maintaining the proper relationship in the home. The father is the "head" of the home. He is also the one who enforces discipline in the home. Paul makes it clear to fathers that they do not have all the rights and the children all the duties. The child has duties but he also has rights. The fathers must not provoke their children to wrath. That is a real danger! This can be done by physical means or mental or even spiritual means. Parents sometimes deprive their children of all hope and of the joy of life. This is an abuse of the position their God has given to them as fathers. Instead, they must nurture them in the chastening and admonition of the Lord. To be a father is a tremendously responsible task. It is not enough that a father provide food and clothing and

other such necessities, but he must nurture them, bring them up, teach them the things of the Lord. The eternal welfare of his children must certainly be of as great concern to a father as their material welfare. Who is sufficient unto these things? When a father is true to his calling as a father, he will make it much easier for the child to obey the fifth commandment. This will insure God's blessing on both. This will also insure a church made up of strong families who bow before the Word of God.

Duty of Christian Slaves

The second specific group which the Apostle addresses are the servants and masters within the church. Many have been disappointed because this author does not condemn slavery and do his utmost to uproot it. Isn't slavery totally inconsistent with Christianity? Of course! However, the approach which Paul takes to this problem is not revolutionary. He brings up the subject in almost all of his epistles and the message is always the same: servants (or slaves) be satisfied with your lot in life; and masters, treat your servants well. We may, however, not lose sight of the fact that he is destroying the institution of slavery with the Word much more effectively than any revolutionary has ever done. If slaves and masters both heed the teachings he gives them, slavery will be destroyed from within, which is far more effective than attacking it from without. It must, therefore, also be observed that Paul never upholds slavery. The gospel has come into that particular social and economic setting and seeks to remold all of life from within.

Paul counsels the slaves to be obedient to those who are their masters according to the flesh. That is the proper place of slaves. If they do not render obedience, they have denied the relationship in which they stand to their masters. But, they must remember, these are only masters over the flesh, not over the spirit. It is well possible to find a slave who is much more free than his master. But, be obedient to masters because it has, for the present, pleased God to place them over you. Do so with fear and trembling. By these two terms he does not mean that they should grovel before their masters but that they should be conscientious in doing the tasks assigned to them and that they should be sincere in their attitude to their masters. They must bring service as though they are bringing it to the Christ Himself. Suddenly the master over their flesh has assumed the place of Christ. This teaching is important for them in doing their work properly.

Serving as Unto the Lord

This manner of bringing proper service is so important that he spends a few more verses on this same topic. They must not try to be well-pleasing to men while the heart isn't in it. They must work as servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart. This will become evident to all over a period of time. Only when they conduct themselves in this way will the masters, whether they be believers or unbelievers, have to come to the conclusion that these people have a different Source of life and a dif-

ferent goal than others. Again Paul says that they are to do service with a good will as unto the Lord, and not unto men. After all, they are rendering service to Christ regardless of the position in life He has given them. That they have this position of servants isn't so bad either, because their Lord assumed that same role voluntarily on their behalf. Must they all be rulers while their Lord became a servant? He also reminds them that the Lord will reward every good thing which they have done and it makes no difference whether they were bond or free when they did these good deeds. Here again the Apostle emphasizes the good-works of believers even though he has shown so clearly in the first chapters that salvation is of the Lord alone. Nevertheless, good works must come to light as fruits of the faith which has been instilled within them. This obedient faith brings forth fruits which the Lord rewards.

Duty of Christian Masters

The last word in this connection is addressed to the masters. There were some of these among the members of the church because the gospel had not only been preached to the down-and-outs. These masters must also show in their relation to their slaves that they have been changed by the gospel. Paul tells them to do the same things to them, meaning the slaves. He, of course, does not mean that these masters must be obedient to the slaves! No, but he has taught the slaves to seek the welfare of their masters in the work and manner of work they did; so must the masters now also seek the welfare of their slaves! They must also stop threatening their slaves. What defense would a slave have against such threatening? Their threatenings would be making misuse of the place they have in their particular society. They are believing masters and must therefore realize that they are also under the jurisdiction of Another. That One is their Master as well as the Master of their slaves. He is in heaven and is not a respecter of persons. In other words, before Him it makes no difference whether they are masters or slaves. He will demand His due from them both!

If these words which have been directed to both slaves and masters are taken to heart, slavery will not be able to exist beyond that generation! Because these words were not obeyed in many places the institution of slavery continued till modern times!

Questions for discussion:

- 1- What is the difference between honoring and obeying one's parents? Is this an important difference? Why?
- 2- How does the promise fit the fifth commandment?
- 3- How can parents provoke their children to anger? Is this child abuse?
- 4- Why doesn't the New Testament simply forbid slavery?
- 5- Do you agree that the Scripture's dealing with slavery would obliterate it in a short time?
- 6- Does the Bible teaching about the master-slave relationship have anything to say to us today concerning the employer-employee relationship? ●

The Doctrine of the Last Things

INTRODUCTION

"What does the future hold?" All of us ask this question at one time or another. For many, the future is full of fear. So plagues is this question that anyone who speaks with the sound of authority becomes a much-sought-after prophet. And then, there are also the psychics, the palm readers or palmists and the writers of horoscope columns.

God's Word About the Future

While God has not revealed to us the minute details of history nor of our personal lives, He has told us about the broad sweep of coming developments and He has told us of our end.

There are large portions of Scripture which, while not giving us a newspaper-story-like account of the end of history as we know it (contrary to current popular authors like Salem Kirban and Hal Lindsey), do give us the general principles of history and which do show us how and toward what God is working. Besides, there is much in Scripture which tells us what happens to us when death comes.

We do not need to wear a path to the crystal ball nor do we need to wear out a horoscope book. That will only lead us to the foolish fabrications of men's minds. In God's Word we find the answer to the question: "What of the future?"

With broad strokes God paints the panorama of history. He also teaches us that believers can testify with Asaph the Psalmist: "... I am continually with thee: Thou hast holden my right hand. Thou wilt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory (73:23, 24)." Learning what God reveals concerning this time, of His leading, we cry out, "So teach us to number our days, That we may get us a heart of wisdom" (Psalm 90:12).

Eschatology

The portion of God's revealed truth which answers the question, "What of the future?" is commonly called *eschatology*. Don't let this strange-sounding word scare you. As you look at it you see

that it has something in common with a more familiar word: *theology*. The *logy* in each comes from a Greek word which you have no doubt heard: *logos*, meaning *word*. Thus *theology* is a word or discourse about God, since the first part of the word comes from a Greek word meaning God. *Eschatology*, literally, is a word about, or a study of, last things, since the first part of the word comes from a Greek word meaning *last*.

Now, while literally *eschatology* should only cover those things and events which lead up to the end of history, it also covers the subject of eternity. According to Geerhardus Vos, *eschatology*, or the doctrine of the last things, is

the teaching or belief, that the world-movement, religiously considered, tends toward a definite final goal, beyond which a new order of affairs will be established, frequently with further implication, that this new order of affairs will not be subject to any further change, but will partake of the static character of the eternal (*The Pauline Eschatology*, p. 1).

In more simple terms, William Hendriksen wrote:

It has to do with those things that are going to happen last of all; that is, at the close of man's earthly life and afterward, and also toward the close of the present dispensation and afterward (*The Bible On the Life Hereafter*, p. 18).

Our Proper Concern

For some, the doctrine of last things is the only part of Scripture that really is important. They will buy any book that appears on the subject and they will listen carefully to any sermon referring to it. All other points in Scripture are insignificant in comparison. Others find an emphasis on last things to be impractical and unimportant. One professing Christian once told his minister who was preaching on the last things, that he couldn't wait for the series to be finished. He said that he simply was not interested.

Both reactions are in error. A wrong emphasis, or no emphasis, ought not to be allowed in Christian thought. There is room for *eschatology*. In fact, it

must be part of our faith. One writer stated that eschatology "does shed a clear light upon every single section of doctrine" (Haering, *The Christian Faith*, p. 381). In fact, it could be said that every part of Biblical truth comes to fulfillment in eschatology. The glory and counsel of God discussed in theology, or the doctrine of God, is fully realized in the teaching on last things. The misery of sin and its chaining death taught in anthropology (or the doctrine of man), is fully crushed and overcome in eschatology. The victory of Christ, probed in Christology (or the doctrine of Christ), is revealed in the doctrine of last things. Soteriology's (the doctrine of salvation) redemption applied by the Holy Spirit is fully completed in eschatology's glorification of the believers. The Church, taught about in ecclesiology, is seen exalted in the doctrine of last things.

No Christian who really loves the Word of God will want to miss the instruction or the comfort given in the portions of Scripture which deal with the last things. Old and New Testament alike lay this instruction, hope and comfort before us. Though many of the prophets spoke of it, perhaps Isaiah is most outstanding (chapters 11, 13, 65, 66, etc.). The New Testament crystalizes what the Old Testament reveals and we are told that living in faith we are to look "for the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ . . ." (Titus 2:13). Perhaps that man who did not like to hear about the return of Christ was revealing that he was afraid of that return because he was not ready for it.

Diverging Views

Just as in every other section of Biblical teaching already discussed there are many differing and often wrong understandings of the Biblical doctrines, they also appear in eschatology. Some of these we will see more specifically as we consider the beautiful truths God has revealed.

There are those who take what God reveals as being all, very literally, fulfilled in the future — a time yet to come. Many who use the *Scotfield Reference Bible* think this way.

Some theologians, like Tillich and Niebuhr, see the language of eschatology in the Bible as merely symbolic. The teaching of the second coming is a reminder and a promise that happiness is not realized historically.

Still others, like C. H. Dodd, have taught a realized eschatology. There is no future coming. Christ is here, right now. The Kingdom has come along with everything which was promised. Bernard Ramm outlines a related view — that of Bultmann: "Life is eschatological when it is open to the future, when it is lived in the free grace of God, when it is love in obedience to the concrete word of God (*A Handbook of Contemporary Theology*, p. 44)."

All of these approaches have taken one aspect of eschatology and magnified it out of proportion so that the doctrine of last things has become a grotesque monster. In doing this the Biblical teaching has been set aside and the resulting instruction and comfort have been missed.

Plan of Study

In the months to follow we will be considering the many aspects of the doctrine of the last things. We will begin with what is usually called *individual eschatology*. This will include physical death, immortality and the intermediate state. Only after considering what happens to each one of us when we come to the end of our present existence will we look at what is usually called *general eschatology*. This portion of our study will be, by far, the largest, since there are so many different aspects of, and so many conflicting views connected with the return of Jesus Christ.

To be sure, this study should be of great value to each believer. God tells us through Peter that we are to live as if the end is now (1 Pet. 4:7). Far from encouraging us to an "other-worldly" style of life, he is emphasizing that we are to live as God's own children. Hearing the blessings which are ours both now and in the future should encourage us to live as recipients and heirs. Learning what God reveals about last things should stimulate us to faithfulness in the spread of the Gospel and to personal prayer. Besides, as we see the great things which God has for His own, and as we learn to understand them, the ignorance which breeds fear departs, and hope and comfort in the Lord grows. ©

IRRESISTIBLE GRACE

Can you prevent the sunrising?
Can you avert the rose from giving
forth its fragrance?
Can you stay the mother's heart
from going out to her child?

Can you stop the hungry from
wanting bread? or
Can you keep the thirsty from the
living waters?
Do the stars cease their shining
by your will?
Is springtime or the springing of
flowers delayed by man's fiat?

Can a dead man resist the
trumpet call at the resur-
rection?

Robert King Churchill

Men and Women: Partners in Service

Review by Paul Ingeneri

"Another book on women in office?" ... "So what!" Before you turn the page however I suggest you take note of this one as it's published by our own CRC Board of Publications. Authored by Dr. Gordon Spykman of Calvin College and Lillian Grissen, Dordt College instructor, this book is the result of a proposal suggested by the Committee for Women in the Christian Reformed Church. This organization, as many know, has as its main goal the opening of all CRC church offices to women.

The purpose of the book is "to present simply and clearly the primary questions that have risen in the church regarding this issue and the general conclusions reached about them by the study committees appointed by the Synod of the CRC" (p. 7). This is a large task and the authors are to be applauded for their desire to serve the church by making the many pages of difficult text in various Acts of Synod accessible to the "layperson." But the biased selection and presentation of materials seriously compromises the book's stated intent of "healing differences" and "promoting a unified and unifying solution to this issue" (p. 7).

Three main areas

First, the Acts of Synod report chosen as foundational to the entire book is the 1973 report on "Ecclesiastical Office and Ordination." It alone of the many synodical reports is singled out for an entire chapter (chap. 3). We might initially think this emphasis to be expected since one must first lay the groundwork of what church office is all about. But it is significant that Synod's strong reactions to the report's imbalance in pitting service against authority and the final Synodical decisions are not even mentioned in the book. The '73 Synod not only felt it necessary to somewhat alter the study committee's conclusions but even added several guidelines as a framework within which the revised study committee's conclusions might be understood (Acts 73, pp. 62-64). This framework tried to patch up the study

committee's recommendations which in the opinion of Synod's advisory committee "did not reflect the fruit of its study of authority" (Acts 73, p. 61). The '73 study committee report contains a great deal of helpful Biblical material but in my opinion the adoption of its recommendations uncritically (as the book does, pp. 35-42, 117, but Synod did not do) makes putting women in office a foregone conclusion. We might also add that the 3 Calvin College professors given the privilege of the floor in behalf of the study are all outspokenly in favor of women in all church offices in the CRC (Acts 73, p. 62).

A second weakness of the book is its frequent use of "loaded" questions and statements. Two clear examples may be cited:

1. It seems that we must limit headship (of the man) to marriage alone or apply it across the board to every sphere of society (pp. 92, 94).

That invites the reply: Why may we not limit our concern with this issue to marriage and the church, as Paul and other Bible writers do?

2. Do you agree that Gal. 3:28 indirectly encourages us to consider whether all the gifts of women should not be used? (p. 97) ... Should we maintain the status quo until the final restoration or should we work toward restoring women to Christian service now? (p. 61)

To that we may answer, "Can we not be ardently for the use of all women's gifts and against admitting them to church office? Consider the gift of pastoring ... It seems that all good mothers and/or church school teachers must use this gift! What we are against is the "progressive's" limiting of the Spirit's creativity by his or her specifying of the place where the gift *must* be used even when that specification contradicts the Spirit's plain directives concerning the requirements for leading and teaching church offices.

Thirdly, much of the book's argument (especially in the discussion of Biblical passages) leans toward what has been called the "progressive" view favoring putting women into church office. This consistent prejudice comes out in a variety of ways:

1. Conservative interpretations of texts are opposed by heavy citations from the arguments of their opponents, while the conservative arguments are virtually ignored. An example of this may be noted in the book's treatment of Jesus' appointment of all male apostles (pp. 80-83).

2. The conservative view is misrepresented — set up as a "straw man." One notes this procedure, for example, in the argument about Genesis 2 which would have us choose between holding women as inferior or making them equal partners (pp. 53, 54). This doesn't do justice to the complexity of the Bible's teaching about both equality and differences.

3. The argument presents options or conclusions which do not at all adequately present or include the conservative view. 1 Corinthians 11, for example is interpreted to teach only the abiding principle of "order in worship," while what Paul teaches about the differences between the divinely assigned roles of men and women as traceable back to God's creation (vv. 8-12; cf. Gen. 2) is ignored (pp. 92-94). The

authors mishandled 1 Cor. 14 (p. 91) and 1 Tim. 2 (pp. 92-94) in the same way, pointedly ignoring Paul's appeal to the divinely direct headship of the man as traceable back to Genesis 2 and his plain prohibitions of women holding ruling church offices.

4. The book simply fails to do justice to the conservatives' arguments against placing women in office as the plain requirements of their recognition of and submission to the Bible's authority.

All in all, I find this book (as I have some others that purported to be "neutral" in dealing with this issue) only partially helpful. It gives an overview of some basic questions, but only partisan answers. We must also question the propriety of the denomination's official publishing agency issuing a book that favors a practice which is still in conflict with the Biblical convictions of a great part of the denomination. I believe that the way to progress in this issue as in all others involving a search for the Bible's teaching is for each side to openly present its position and strongest arguments so that the Christian may test both views by the standard of God's Word. While he or she may find helpful and challenging insights in both sets of arguments, it will often become apparent that the over-all thrust of one view will not square with Scripture. I believe that placing women in church offices is such an issue. ●

The Miraculous Shroud?

by Daniel K. Tennant*

Fact or Fiction

During the week prior to Easter, a very interesting news special took one to the Roman Catholic cathedral in Turin, Italy to view behind bulletproof glass the so called divine apparition known as the Shroud of Turin. As the television camera panned across the crowd, hundreds were literally mesmerized by the spectacle of the shroud; elderly women were pathetically sobbing, men were mechanically genuflecting, young school children were praying

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upward at it. Indeed, this piece of ancient cloth has been the talk and excitement even among born again Christians. While mentioning some thoughts about the shroud to a brother, he stated his allegiance to the scientific findings (regardless of the fact that the Bible flatly opposes these findings!) and believed that to question the veracity of its genuineness was something akin to blasphemy. (Two years ago a team of some thirty experts in various areas of science spent considerable time in determining whether the shroud was fact or fiction. The majority of them felt that it was the actual burial shroud of the Lord Jesus Christ.)

Not One Shroud But Many Strips

In this brief consideration of the Shroud of Turin, the question may be simply posed — what are Christians to think about the shroud? Surprisingly, although the shroud seems quite novel to us, the great John Calvin had written about it in 1553. In order to understand what Calvin wrote, one should be enlightened as to Jewish burial procedure, particularly in Christ's own burial. We read in John's account that Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea, "took the body of Jesus, and bound it in linen bandages, along with the aromatics, as is the burial custom of the Jews." John 19:40, Translation by William Hendriksen. Dr. W. E. Vine, noted Greek scholar, states that Christ's body was firstly wrapped with a full length shroud and then wound tightly with bandage-like strips, for the Greek word for cloth in Matthew (sindon) means shroud, whereas in John, the Greek word (othonion) indicates bandage-like strips. A workable solution in harmonizing these two words is available. The feasible solution is that, "the clean linen cloth in which the body had been wrapped, was now torn in swathes or cloths, into which the body, limb by limb, was now bound, no doubt between layers of myrrh and aloes, the head being wrapped in a napkin." From *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, p. 642, vol. 2. John states that the two disciples encountered a napkin and the linen bandages (John 20:6, 7), no mention is made of a shroud for if it had existed, it now existed as the long bandage-like strips.

Conservative theologians such as Merrill Tenney, Leon Morris, and William Hendriksen have all written that the burial cloth was simply, "bandage-like wrappings," "thin strips of handages," "long bandage-like strips," or "strips of linen." Such being the case, we have ample grounds for rejecting the shroud as fact for it is inconsistent with the Johannine account: that Peter and John did see *two* piles of burial covering, not one.

Calvin's Thoughts on the Shroud

Calvin wrote about the shroud in 1553, "... that his head was wrapped in a napkin refutes the falsehood of the Papists, who pretend that the whole body was sewn up in one linen cloth, which they show to the unhappy masses to adore. I overlook their ignorance of Latin, which led them to make the word "napkin" (which was used to wipe sweat off the face) into a covering for the whole body ... but this

gross falsehood is intolerable, for it openly contradicts the gospel history. To this is added the fabulous miracle which they have invented, that the likeness of Christ's body is impressed on the linen. I ask you if such a miracle had been performed would the Evangelist have suppressed it when he is so careful to relate less important things?" *Commentary on John*, John Calvin, vol. 2, p. 194.

The Nails in Christ's Palms

Perhaps the greatest objection to the shroud is its adherents' insistence (and some medical doctors'), that it is impossible for the weight of a body to be suspended by the nails through the palms (hands), that the nails had to be driven in between the ulna and radius (bones of the forearm) at the area of the wrists. Historical data has shown that Jesus was nailed to a Latin cross; it would have been impossible for the sign above his head to be fastened on the other two types of crosses also used (the St. Andrews cross and the St. Anthony cross.) "On the Latin cross a pegma (Greek) or cornu/sedile — Latin) supported the weight of the body to prevent it from tearing the hands free." *New Bible Dictionary*, p. 282.

The modern research team that will soon publish their findings insist that the nails had to go through Christ's wrists, for that is how they are found on the shroud. What are we to say of this? Turning to John 20:24, 25, we find Thomas the doubter blatantly stating, "unless I see in His hands the marks of the nails . . ." (NIV). Here we find God's infallible Word deciding the issue for us. Christ's hands were pierced, not His wrists, therefore the shroud may be rejected on these grounds.

The Bible Our Standard

As Christians we must remain grounded in the Word of God. Where scientific investigation leads astray, we must remain steadfast and be counted fools for Christ's sake. We can reject the authenticity of the shroud on the following grounds: The New Testament account of the grave clothes mentions two pieces covering Christ, the shroud is one piece of cloth, Thomas saw the nail prints in Christ's hands, not his wrists as the shroud would have us believe, we are to walk by faith, not by sight, the Shroud of Turin can do nothing for Christians except become an object of idolatry and falsehood, and the last reason we should consider is that Satan, the enemy of our souls, has the ability to deceive and work lying wonders.

Science is not Infallible

In closing, a thought from the late Dr. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, "If you study the history of science you will have much less respect for its supposed supreme authority than you had when you began . . . let us remember that so many of their assertions are mere suppositions and theories which cannot be proved, and which may very well be disproved, as so many have been disproved during the past one hundred years." *Authority*, p. 40. ●

Too Late Smart?

*They were bored
Moving toward
Unseen goals
For their souls.
"We want fun
For each one!"
They exclaimed,
Tongue untamed.*

*"You must work,
Never shirk,"
Was my spur
To bestir
Dreamy minds
From their blinds.
"Live in hope,
Not with dope."*

*"That's your side."
They replied,
Scorned the chance
To advance,
Squandered hours
Doodling flow'rs,
Hindered brains
Making gains.*

*They will learn
That they spurn
God's commands
For their hands;
They despise
Ways to rise;
They destroy
Hope of joy.*

*Don't they know
Where to go
To find grace
As they face
Work at school
And the fool?
They should be
Christians, free.*

*Richard Vander Zee
South Holland, Ill.*

Offenses Differ

R. B. Kuiper

A fellow church member and I get into an argument. Nobody else is present. We differ sharply and honestly. After a while he loses his temper and calls me "a hypocrite." Of course, I feel offended. What am I to do? Scripture gives a clear answer to that question. The offense is *both personal and private*. To precisely that sort of offense Jesus addressed Himself in Matthew 18:15-17, "If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone; if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church; but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican."

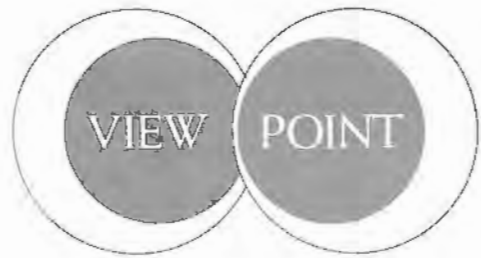
I am walking down Broad Street. Ahead of me is a saloon. Just as I pass it, out steps a fellow church member. I greet him and, a bit dazed, he returns the greeting. There is a distinct smell of liquor on his breath and his gait is far from steady. Beyond all doubt, he is "under the influence." What am I as the sole witness to do? Does Matthew 18:15-17 apply here? To be sure, the offense was not directed against me personally and hence is *not personal* in that sense, but, being known to the offender and me alone, it certainly is *private*. Therefore I do not tell my friends about this incident, nor do I inform the minister, neither does it occur to me to rush to the next meeting of the elders in order to insist that they discipline the erring brother. Contrariwise, in the hope of both gaining my brother and saving his reputation I follow the procedure stipulated by the Lord Jesus in the aforesaid passage of Scripture. James 5:19, 20 also applies: "Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth and one convert him, let him know that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death and shall hide a multitude of sins."

I am a member of the Christian Reformed Church. A minister of that church writes a book or a magazine article in which he denies a cardinal teaching of the Reformed faith — that from eternity God fore-

ordained unalterably all that was to come to pass. That book or article is published. I read the published denial. Is it wrong for me in a book review or a magazine article of my own to reflect critically on the denial without previously having followed the procedure of Matthew 18:15-17? Most certainly not, for here is an offense which is *neither personal nor private*. Instead, it is a *public offense against the truth*. For that very reason the matter requires that I speak up without delay. And, while Christian love demands that I work and pray to the end that the erring brother may recant, I ought not to be dilatory about laying the matter before the proper ecclesiastical assembly.

In their *Church Order Commentary* Van Dellen and Monsma say quite correctly: "Public sins are to be reported to the Consistory forthwith, not because the general office of all believers has no duties to perform in such cases, but because of the public offense given, which offense must be removed as soon as possible, and because the sin is already known to many and therefore its immediate revelation to the Consistory cannot be termed uncharitable. Fellow believers must certainly show concern when one of their number errs. They should admonish the erring also in case the sin committed is public. But the public offense, the blot upon God's Church and His sacred name must be removed as soon as possible, and that can only be done publicly. Consequently public sins are to be reported to the Consistory forthwith" (pp. 305f.). ●

Editor's note: This article of Professor R. B. Kuiper is reprinted from our November 1965 Torch and Trumpet. In support of Kuiper's remarks we observe that when the Apostle Paul saw Peter acting inconsistently with the gospel and thereby causing public offense in the church at Antioch (Gal. 2:11ff.) he did not take up the matter with Peter privately according to the procedure Matthew 18 prescribes for dealing with private differences, but rebuked him immediately before the whole church. By disregarding the difference between public and private problems and responsibilities in these matters, Matthew 18 is often being misused to silence public criticism and in that way protect and perpetuate offenses to Christian doctrine and life which it was intended to remove. In such cases we see the Scripture cited for a purpose the opposite of that for which it was given.



The Church has a Right to Know

Henry Vanden Heuvel

The Grand Rapids Press on Saturday, December 26, 1981, printed an article under the headline, " 'Adam and Eve' Issue Leads to Seminary Dialogue." The article reported on a meeting held at Calvin Seminary the previous Tuesday in which professors at the seminary discussed with students certain controversial questions relative to Scriptural interpretation.

It is to be granted at once that the article in the *Press* contained some inaccuracies. For example, the article stated that Allen Verhey had applied for ministerial candidacy, but was rejected because of his controversial viewpoints. This of course is not the case, and the *Press* printed a correction several days later. However the fact that a meeting was held at Calvin Seminary for this purpose is of course the case.

It would be worthwhile to consider the background of this meeting which was the basis for the *Press* article. The student newspaper of the seminary called *Kerux* has been running a weekly "Instapoll" in which certain questions are asked inviting the opinion of the students. These questions deal with practical aspects of life in the seminary, and are generally quite harmless. In this issue dated December 11, 1981, a questionnaire appeared which apparently departed from the usual harmless nature of the "Instapoll." The students were asked the following three questions:

"1. On a scale from 1 to 5, how important do you consider questions relating to the historicity of Adam and Eve to be?

"2. Do you believe that Adam and Eve were real persons (as you and I are real persons)?
Yes _____ No _____ Undecided _____

"3. Are you satisfied with the opinions of the seminary professors (in so far as you are aware of those opinions) on the historicity of the events recorded in Genesis 1-11? Yes _____ No _____ Undecided _____ I do not have enough information on this matter to give an opinion _____."

The next issue of the *Kerux* magazine reported that the student Senate, which is the student coun-

cil, requested that the editor of the student paper not print the results of the "Instapoll." The request further stated that the Senate hoped to hold a meeting at which the issues raised in the "Instapoll" could be discussed. Apparently the meeting referred to in the *Press* article was the result of the Senate's decision and request.

All of this of course raises some important questions. These questions which were the concern of the "Instapoll" and which were discussed at the meeting referred to, come at a very critical time in the history of Calvin Seminary. There is no question that the seminary is under a cloud because of the rejection of Clayton Libolt by the Synod of the CRC 1981. The fact that this man was recommended by a majority of the faculty members and then rejected by Synod because of his views on the very questions raised by the student paper is more than coincidental. Whatever else one can say about the relationship of these two events, one surely must say that the questions raised are relevant.

Certainly the professors at Calvin Seminary desire to have the cloud lifted from them and from the seminary. And now an opportunity has been given to them to have that cloud lifted. The students themselves have offered to them such an opportunity to come clearly before the seminary community and the church as well, as to their position respecting these important questions. But when the results of the questionnaire were received by the student paper, the editor was asked to repress them.

Now it is to be deplored that the author of the *Press* article suggested that since four faculty members out of sixteen said at the meeting that they believe Adam and Eve were real, the other professors apparently don't believe the Genesis account of the Bible. This kind of conclusion is unwarranted. At the same time, however, to what conclusion can one come when questions about the students' understanding of their professors' view of Genesis 1 to 11 are suppressed? Doesn't this suppression of the result of the "Instapoll" suggest that the professors are not willing to come out clearly with their opinions?

There have been several requests or overtures to the Board of Trustees of Calvin Seminary from churches or classes requesting the Board to inquire of the seminary professors their position on the issues in question. These requests have not been received graciously by some in the seminary community. But when we in the church receive reports of the opinions of students regarding their professors' stand on these issues being suppressed, what conclusion are we to draw? These overtures to the Board are right. Let the professors come clean on this issue. Do they or do they not believe in the factuality of Adam and Eve? in the factuality of the serpent? of the fall in Genesis 3? and the like. The church has a right to know what our seminary professors believe on these matters. And these men have the responsibility to answer these questions before the entire church. They all signed the Form of Subscription in which they "promised to be always willing and ready to comply with such requisition."

The Clarity of Scripture

Jelle Tuininga

The fraternal delegates of the Geref. Kerken to our Synod of 1981 said something to the effect that if the Geref. Kerken erred on the side of not believing that the Scriptures speak with sufficient clarity on certain issues facing the church (e.g. homosexuality), the CRC erred on the opposite side — in believing that the teaching of Scripture is all too clear and speaks quite decisively on such issues. While the Gereformeerden were perhaps a bit too reckless, we were much too careful.

When I first read this, I thought to myself: If they only knew! We are not nearly so certain about the Scriptures as we used to be. Witness, for example, all the study committees we have appointed in the last decade. In many cases, these committees were appointed because we didn't like what we were quite sure the Bible was saying, and so we wanted to "study" the matter some more to see if we couldn't find room for some ideas that were more palatable to us. It may sound a bit unkind to say this, but I'm convinced that's the way it is (take, for example, the question of women in office, the dance question, etc.). Little wonder that in many cases the results of these studies were inconclusive and unsatisfactory to many.

Regarding the homosexual question, Synod did ask the Geref. Kerken "to reconsider, in the light of what we believe to be the explicit witness of Scripture, its extremely controversial and regrettable statement of pastoral advice on the matter." However, the Rev. John Vriend objected to the words "explicit" and "regrettable" and recommended their deletion. And the report in *The Banner* stated that "several Canadian delegates attempted first to delete some of the sharper language and, failing that, to refer the resolution back to the committee." In other words, some of the delegates did not think the Scriptures spoke that clearly on the matter. In that respect the CRC is not all that much different from the Geref. Kerken.

The same can be said regarding the interpretation of the first chapters of Genesis, as this came to expression in the candidacy of Clayton Libolt. In discussing this matter, a Canadian colleague stated that "the simple people back home" could not understand what was really involved in the issue. Another said it was necessary to understand "from where he (Libolt) was coming" in order to make a proper judgment. When I hear comments like this then I can't help but think of what Jesus said about becoming like children to enter the kingdom, and about "hiding these things from the wise and understanding and revealing them to babes" (including "the simple people back home").

In a report of his work to the Canadian churches, the executive director of the Canadian Council of Chr. Ref. Churches, Rev. A. Van Eek, said the Council was engaged in discussion and cooperation with other churches in Canada, for in many of these churches "there is a lack of clarity on the nature and extent of biblical authority." When I read that I thought: Let's put our own house in order first. There isn't all that much clarity among ourselves regarding this crucial issue. Some homework is in order. ●

Schuller Our Guide?

Jelle Tuininga

I read on a recent church bulletin: "Pastor _____ and his wife are presently attending the Robert Schuller Institute for Successful Church Leadership in the Los Angeles, California area. Pastor _____ has been asked by the Board of Home Missions to attend this."

This is, of course, not the first time that I read or heard about this. It has been going on for some years. But I get annoyed every time again: Is this a stewardly use of money, and is this the direction the Home Missions Board wants to pursue? I understand that the Amway Corporation is supplying the funds for these trips, and so it does not cost the Home Mission Board anything. But that does not change the principle of the thing, nor does it in any way allay my misgivings. Fact is, knowing something of the business philosophy of Amway only increases my concern: must this same philosophy be applied to the church? Must we measure the church in terms of "success"? Must Madison Avenue business technique be applied to the church? Is the church a commercial enterprise? The questions Dr. Praamsma asks with respect to the "oligarchic structure" of the World Council of Churches can, *mutatis mutandis*, be asked here:

Should the churches be organized as a big business? Are permanent offices and ministrations apart from those of the local churches justifiable on the basis of Scripture? Shouldn't national and international assemblies of the church be of short duration and bear a humble character? (p. 216 of *The Church in the Twentieth Century*)

We do well, too, to listen to what the Rev. Edwin Walhout wrote not long ago in *The Banner*: "The success or failure of the Word of God is not determined by earthly standards of judgment. Success or failure is measured by faithfulness to the Word of God, not by earthly measurements . . . A congregation likewise should not deceive itself that it is alive simply because it sets goals and meets them successfully, nor should it become discouraged by lack of earthly results." We need to be reminded of that today, also in the CRC. Remember Sardis: "You have a name that you are living, but you are dead" (Rev. 3:1).

It seems quite clear to me that Schuller's successful "jumbo" church concept goes contrary to the general tenor of Scripture. Consider only the following passages: Deut. 7:7; Isa. 42:1-4 — "We who are so impressed by power, must learn that Jesus turned to the helpless" (*Daylight*); the little stone of Daniel 2 versus the huge image; Micah 5:2; Zech. 4:6; Matth. 13:31-2; Luke 1:51-53 — "Yes, it's a simple tune, the song of Hannah and the song of Mary. . . . You can hear this tune everywhere in the Bible, and all of us had better learn it — now or never. 'He has put down the mighty from their thrones, and exalted those of low degree' " (*Daylight*); Luke 12:32; I Cor. 1:26-29; Rev. 3:8b.

And now I haven't said anything yet about Schuller's man-centered, power-of-positive-thinking version of the gospel, nor about the ever-present-smiling-image of the electronic church, nor of the un-stewardly shrine called the crystal cathedral. Nor will I comment on some of the baneful results present in churches where "Schullerism" is applied. I simply cannot understand the Home Mission Board's fascination for this kind of business. It does nothing to enhance their reputation in my eyes. ●

Speaking the Truth In Love

Jelle Tuininga

I just returned home from a special Classis meeting which dealt with problems in one of the member churches. Though personalities do often enter the picture, the problem was by and large of a theological nature. Classis was called upon to adjudicate a number of appeals questioning the theological direction of the congregation.

In the course of the sessions which lasted for two and a half days I was again struck by something I had observed before at classical and synodical gatherings: the choice of Scripture passages read before the different sessions, and the content of the prayers offered at various times. Judging by the Scripture reading and prayers, one would conclude that the entire issue was one of personalities, a disagreement among brothers. The comments accompanying the Scripture reading were generally along the same line: let's be sure not to judge each other, and be careful not to hurt each other or impugn each other's motives.

Now to be sure, there is nothing wrong with admonitions to love each other as such. The Bible frequently enjoins that upon us. But what is disturbing is the *one-sidedness* of such remarks. Too often love of the neighbor is divorced from love for God and His Word. And that is still the *first and great commandment*. We are so afraid of hurting each other that we seldom stop to ask: Are we perhaps hurting God by compromising on His Word, and not upholding His truth? The second commandment has become the first. I think of the comment of one delegate in closing devotions: "Let's not say to each other, 'I am right and you are wrong.'" But Paul didn't hesitate to say this to his brother Peter (Gal. 2:11ff.) and he told the Galatians he would even pronounce a curse upon an angel from heaven if it was necessary. He also warned about men "from among your own selves" who would speak perverse things (Acts 20:30). And the Lord Jesus himself condemned those in the church who were teaching false doctrine in his letters to the seven churches of Revelation.

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My point is: Do we have as great a love for God and His Word as we do for each other? Why are passages like I Cor. 13, Eph. 4:1-6, & 25-32 such favorites at classical and synodical meetings, while passages like Gal. 1:6-10, I Tim. 1 & 4, II John & Jude are seldom or never used? Is this an honest use of Scripture? And is there a possibility that some of our prayers are less than pleasing in God's sight, especially when we seem to be using them to pres-

sure God into agreeing with us? Prof. K. J. Popma says in his work on the catechism that God's name is taken in vain and blasphemed far more in the church than in the world. He probably has a point. Meanwhile we do well to keep in mind what Art. VII of the Belgic Confession tells us: We may not consider any writings of men or succession of times and persons "as of equal value with the truth of God, since the truth is above all."



Conservatives in the CRC

To the editor of *The Outlook*:

I would like to take up the challenge of Dr. Theodore Plantinga, and respond to "Conservatives in the CRC." However I don't know if I want to identify with the conservatives as Dr. Plantinga sees them. Maybe I am not a conservative. I consider myself a Reformed person (Gereformeerd), but even that is not saying much anymore.

If conservative means that I have to take the creation days to be periods of 24 hours, — no. If it means to believe in an historical Adam, — yes. If it means that the Bible is the Word of God, yes. If it means that Genesis 9:6 orders us to tell modern states to institute capital punishment, no. If it means that we must take our confessions seriously, yes.

Dr. Plantinga and his kind claim that we are not well informed, not with it, holding back. As if now the Reformed theology has found the way. However what is really new in the modern theology? I agree that we have received new hermeneutical insights from recent discoveries, and we are thankful for it; it has helped us to better understand many places in Scripture. However it has not changed our basic theology, though some might have found an excuse in it to change the theology.

Probably I am not very well able to judge the American scene, the American "conservative." I immigrated to Canada in 1960. In 1940 I started my studies at the Free University of Amsterdam. Under the professors: Aalders, Van Gelderen, Grosheide, Berkouwer, Nauta, Waterink, Vollenhove. I don't have the impression that the scholarly achievements of these teachers was anywhere below the achievements of faculties I am somewhat familiar with on this continent. Neither can we say

that they were not informed about modern day discoveries and theories. Dr. Berkouwer taught us a course on Neo-Orthodoxy. Already then these professors refuted theories which now in some form or other try to get a hold of our institutions. Now who is behind? Forty years ago these theories were rejected by our teachers; now they receive some new incentives and a new coat or a new name, and they make some people all elated. The brochure of Dr. A. Kuyper "Fata Morgana" was old already then — Fata Morgana, — a mirage. We are getting the old liberalism introduced in some new forms. Because some of our people "behind the wheel" don't realize what we are heading for, they are so excited, they cannot stop.

When we left the Netherlands in 1960 the situation seemed pretty sound, and arriving on this continent, our impression was that the CRC was somewhat less Reformed than the body we came from, less Calvinistic, though they had a "Calvin" college. We considered the CRC people, especially the ones from South of the border, somewhat moralistic, not to say pietistic. We felt that our Reformed teaching told us to get more involved in evangelism, in politics, in social issues, in labour, in higher education. And many of us succeeded.

We also know about the disastrous consequences visible in churches that pay lip-service to the confessions, to the form of subscription, to the church order, and above all to the "infallible" word of God, while they at the same time tolerate teachings that are destroying the unity of the church. Dr. Plantinga is asking for "dialogue." What kind of dialogue can we expect, when nobody is listening? Dialogue when already beforehand we are put in the corner of the backward people. Thank you editor for letting me say this.

Rev. Jacob Binnema,
Telkwa, B.C.

Reformed Creeds in Our Schools

Dear Peter,

Would you be so kind as to publish the following retraction soon in *The Outlook*?

I would like to apologize to CSI and to the readers of *The Outlook* for my ill-considered remarks on the "secrecy" with which the new creedal proposal is being handled in the CSI (cf. my article, "Are the Reformed Creeds Worth Keeping in the Schools," *Outlook* Jan., 1982). I had drawn some inferences from comments by other people without really checking things out for myself. Today, however, I received a very gracious letter, with some other docu-

ments, from Michael T. Ruiter, Executive Director of CSI, which persuaded me that I was wrong. Apparently the problems which Myron Rau (November *Outlook*) and others have had in getting information were not the fault of CSI, and CSI did promote some discussion and solicit some response on the matter during 1981.

I am still rather concerned, however, about the "low key" treatment of this issue in the publications and among the broader constituency of CSI. I would reiterate my point that creedal revision in CSI is just as important for CSI as creedal revision in the CRC would be for the CRC. Everybody needs to become informed on this issue. I trust that my article made some contribution toward that goal.

Sincerely, In Christ,
John M. Frame
Escondido, California

Mid-America Reformed Seminary

With interest I read the article in the December 1981 *OUTLOOK* regarding the above, written by N. D. Kloosterman. I am very happy that the "truly Reformed" stream in the Christian Reformed Churches took the step of establishing this seminary. However, remembering the past, I worry about the future.

In 1944 there was a schism in the Gereformeerde Kerken in the Netherlands. About 10% went out and established Gereformeerde Kerken (Article 31). In the 90% left in the Gereformeerde Kerken in the Netherlands there was a strong segment of conservative members, later called "de Verontrusten" ("the Worriers"), but even that movement caved in under liberal pressure. Today in the GKN ordained female ministers, elders and deacons are now normal; let us not even go into the teachings of Kuitert, etc.

In the Gereformeerde Kerken (Article 31) in the year 1968 problems arose, with the result that 10% left and are now called Nederlandse Gereformeerde Kerk. Basically, these left because they felt (a) a lack of love among the membership, (b) the concept of "the only true church" and (c) legalism was creeping in.

Today, in the Canadian Reformed Churches (offshoot of the Gereformeerde Kerken [Article 31]) the same three problems are on the upswing. These problems create isolation, with, as a result, sectarianism and cold legalism. As a member of this church I worry about this development. Although we have ministers and members opposing this trend, I fear that they are losing their influence.

In the Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk, the original State Church, there are also two main streams, the "Vryzinnigen" (Freethinkers) and the Gereformeerde Bonders, the latter being the orthodox wing.

We see a comparable division developing in the Christian Reformed churches in the U.S. and Canada. Now the new seminary will supply ministers to the orthodox CRC churches. The local churches are independent, but with two streams of thought in them, and whichever stream has the majority in the consistory will call the minister it feels it needs. Eventually we will see CRC and Orthodox CRC; thus polarization will take place. This will create enormous problems in classes and synods resulting in a schism.

The Worriers in the Gereformeerde Kerken in the Netherlands have lost the battle against liberalism; the objectors in the Canadian Reformed Church seem to be losing their battle against sectarianism and legalism. However the future looks bright — this new seminary could be the focal point of hope for the truly Reformed in the CRC and the objectors in the Canadian Reformed Churches. This development does not remove the problems that the churches have faced since the Reformation. Why do the Reformed churches either water down their principal doctrine or create a stifling legalism? Since the Reformation these problems have not been created by the common members, but by the professors and teachers. Are the professors at fault? No, not they, but the people that appoint them to our seminaries and colleges are responsible.

I still dream of a United Reformed Church in which we can receive all who believe in the Bible as God's infallible Word and its doctrine as confessed in our Reformed Forms of Unity or Confessions.

Yours in Christ,
R. Winkel
6 Wolf Willow Pnt.
Edmonton, Canada T5T 1E3



ROMANS — CHAPTERS 9-16, by William Hendriksen. Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Mich., 535 pp., \$12.95. Reviewed by John Vander Ploeg.*

That Dr. William Hendriksen, notwithstanding his years, has found it possible to publish yet another in his series of New Testament Commentaries will be hailed as a godsend by all who recognize and appreciate the scholarly exegesis, the lucid presentation of material, and also the unwavering commitment to the historic Christian faith — of which Hendriksen has abundantly proved himself to be a master.

Of Romans, John Calvin has said that "if we have gained a true understanding of this Epistle, we have an open door to all the most profound treasures of Scripture." With his first volume on *Romans* (chapters 1-8) so closely followed now by this second volume on *Romans* (chapters 9-16), Hendriksen has done much to enable us to avail ourselves of such "a true understanding of this Epistle."

Indefatigable in his zeal to handle the Word aright, Hendriksen appears to be squeezing out every moment of time and every ounce of energy left to him to add one first-rate New Testament commentary to another in an already prodigious achievement. Volumes now available are his commentaries on Matthew (1023 pp.); Mark (708 pp.); Luke (1136 pp.); John (773 pp.); Romans 1-8 (314 pp.); Romans 9-16 (240 pp.); Galatians, and Ephesians (568 pp.); Philipians, Colossians, and Philemon (475 pp.); Thessalonians, Timothy, and Titus (643 pp.). To this list may be added *More Than Conquerors* (on Revelation) as well as other valuable publications.

There are passages in Romans that are by no means easy to interpret and the occasion for controversy. Examples are the fol-

lowing: "Even as it is written, Jacob I loved but Esau I hated" (9:13); "and so all Israel shall be saved; even as it is written..." (11:26). It is precisely at difficult passages such as these that Hendriksen, rather than conveniently bypassing them, is at his best in guiding the reader to avoid the pitfalls of misinterpretation and to arrive at a proper understanding of them. As a commentator, he is blessed with the remarkable ability to make the meaning of difficult passages plain to the educated and the uneducated alike.

Bible scholars of Hendriksen's caliber are not always recognized for their real worth by those nearest to them, and it is often only in retrospect that they come fully into their own. Although already widely acclaimed for their abiding worth in the field of religious literature, it may be confidently affirmed that, as time goes on, Hendriksen's New Testament Commentaries will occupy a well-deserved place as classics in the libraries of those who receive and esteem the Bible as God's inspired, infallible, and inerrant Word.

A note of commendation to Mrs. Hendriksen for all the assistance she gives in preparing her husband's copy for the printer is also very much in order.

Note: The above review was written before Dr. Wm. Hendriksen was taken home to be with the Lord on Tuesday afternoon, January 12.

FROM THE BACKSEAT

*Yes, I am on the backseat.
My vehicle has been hijacked.
The driver is intoxicated
took a mind-expanding drug
has a very wide view of the road.
He sees beautiful mirages
He is ready to fly off to them —
Yes he does, — off the road.
He does not hear the warnings
because the backseat people
only have a narrow view.
Now we are heading for that cliff.
I want to get out.*

Jacob Binnema