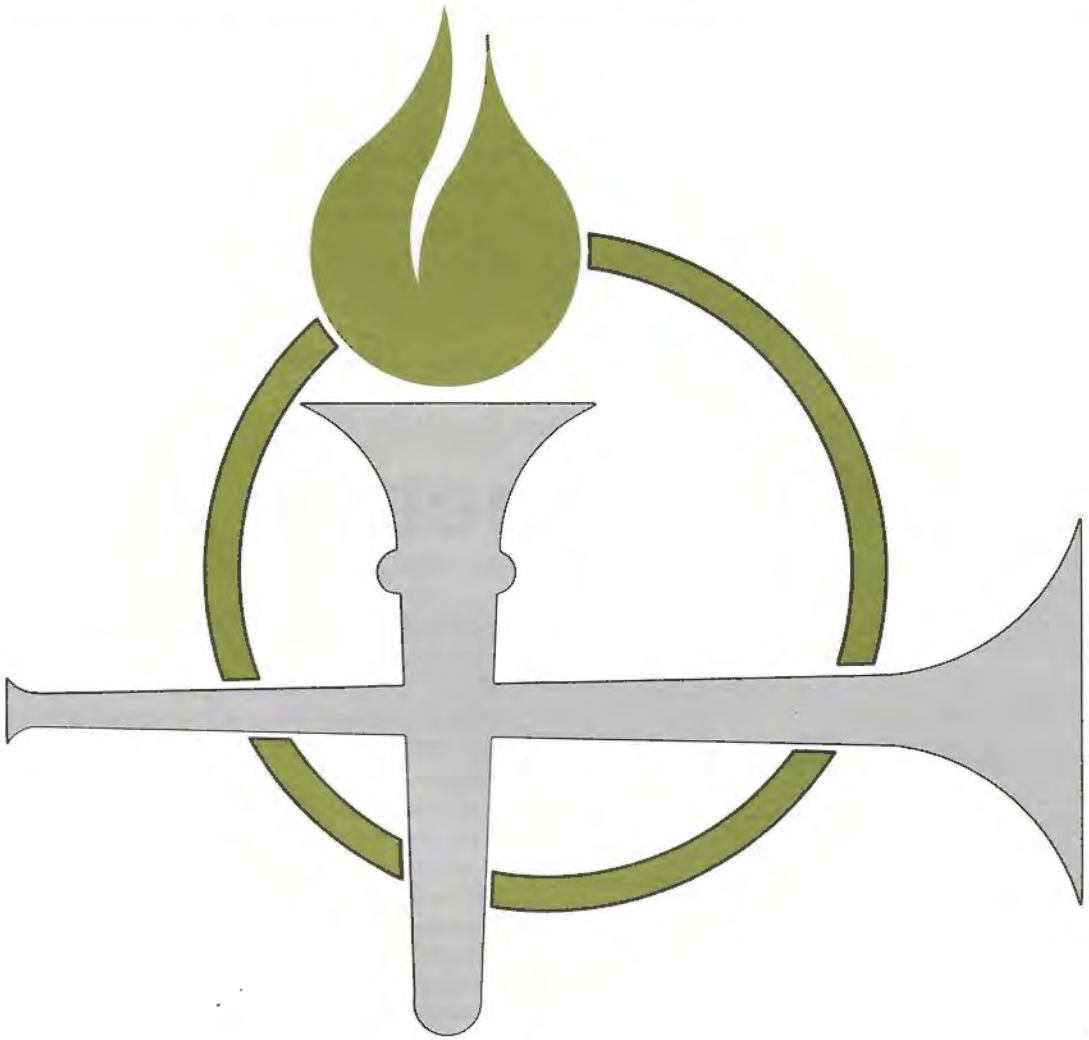
THE OUTLOOK

DEVOTED TO THE EXPOSITION AND DEFENSE OF THE REFORMED FAITH

FEBRUARY 1984



REFORMED MINISTRY TODAY
LUTHER AND MUSIC
"REPORT 44" — ANOTHER ROUND?

Report 44 — Another Round?

Peter De Jong

New Report on a Report

I recently obtained a copy of an imposing 25-page document entitled, "Report to the Six Midwest Reformed Classes on the 1972 Report 44 on the Nature and extent of Biblical Authority." Why should anyone want to resurrect a document about which there was a good deal of discussion and often wearisome debate twelve years ago? The introduction refers to the importance of the subject, the "unrest" in the churches aroused by the report, and the need to "resolve the issues associated with" the report. Preliminary discussions led to the appointment of a committee "to critically evaluate and rewrite Report 44 in order to simplify the language and clarify the ambiguities that exist in the report, with a view to removing the unrest created by Report 44 and giving guidance to the churches in the area of understanding the authority of Scripture" (p. 3). Plainly acknowledged in this mandate are the complexities and "ambiguities" in the report that have "created unrest" and confusion in the churches instead of removing them.

The committee, instead of rewriting the report "in order" to simplify the language and clarify the ambiguities that exist" in it, decided to set aside this major part of its mandate and instead produced a partisan defense of the document and explanations which attempt to "interpret" away its "ambiguities" admitted in the mandate. The committee explains its failure to do the requested rewriting and simplification of the 1972 report by citing *differences of opinion among its members "as to what some sections meant"* and by a footnote citing the fact that even the synods of 1973 and 1977 have refused requests to revise, rescind, reject, or give a popular version of it. Perhaps also the lack of the "critical evaluation," which was ordered in the mandate, may be partly explained by the fact that some members of this "study committee" were producers of the report they were supposed to be criticizing. We are rarely good judges of our own work. At any rate the new 25 pages of defense can hardly be expected to clarify or settle anything with respect to this 12 year-old, 53-page testimony to the churches' confusion about the Bible's authority.

The Original Compromise Document

Why have the efforts of a denominational committee a dozen years ago to help the churches understand and respond to the authority of the Bible produced the continuing confusion and unrest of which this new document gives fresh evidence? Report 44 and later discussions of it, including this new one, often described the subject as extremely complex.

It became evident in the discussions of 1972, and even more evident in another decade of developments that defi-

ciencies of "Report 44," the fact that it has created as much or more confusion and unrest than it settled, are not the result of the complexity of the problems, or of any lack of effort or ability on the part of the committee that produced it. They resulted from the fact that the committee was attempting to do an impossible thing. It was trying to hold and harmonize two inherently contradictory views of the Bible's authority.

The two opposing views were already represented in the occasions for the appointment of the committee. On one hand the church of Fruitland, Ontario, repeatedly overturned the Christian Reformed synods to take corrective measures against the Liberal views of the Bible, (of creation, the fall, and the life of Christ) being held in the sister churches in the Netherlands and also bringing unrest among us. On the other hand, we were also addressed by the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands. The Reformed Ecumenical Synod in 1958 had issued a strong report on the Bible's inspiration, which the Dutch churches criticized as failing to deal with modern problems. They therefore wanted us to study "the connection between the content and purpose of Scripture as the saving revelation of God in Jesus Christ and the consequent and deductible authority of Scripture." The committee was thus under pressure from opposite sides, *to oppose* and *to accept* the qualifications of the Bible's authority proposed in the Netherlands. Was the Bible's authority simply that of God's Word, or must that authority be qualified? Instead of choosing between these two views, which were both represented also in the committee, the committee, as was once frankly admitted in some discussions with it, set out to bring these two views together. It increasingly tried to argue (first in the earlier "Report 36" and then even more vigorously in the revision, Number 44) that there was no difference between these two, but that they were two sides of the same truth.

These two views are not the same, but they contradict each other. (L. De Koster once wrote that they can no more be combined than oil and water.) The first holds that the Bible be believed and obeyed because it is God's Word, regardless of what it says. The second holds that its authority over us depends not just on *Who* says it, but on "its content" or *what* it says! Although what it says is, of course, important, not that but its *Author* determines its *authority*. It makes no sense to say first that we must believe and obey it because it is God's Word and then to say that we must determine from our study of its contents whether and to what extent we should believe and obey it. Yet that is what the report tries to do. The Authority of the Bible depends on the Author *who* is speaking, not on our analysis of *what* was said. The fatal fault of this report is that in discussing the Bible's authority it permitted attention to be diverted from God the author, to misleading and futile argument about what authority could be conjectured from what was said.

The Bible's Authority is that of its Author

The Bible itself states clearly and stresses the first point of view, but leaves no room at all for the second. Consider, for example, Jesus' encounter with and praise of the Roman centurion as an example to His followers of unquestioning recognition of and faith in His authority (Matt. 8:5-13). The basic principle of military authority, that the word of the officer will be carried out without delay or question, is the model for all who will have a place in the Lord's kingdom. Suppose that a new army recruit is ordered by his officer to pick up the rubbish on the parade ground. If he

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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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would reply, "Aye, aye sir, but I will have to study your order in the light of its contents and purpose relating to our national defense to determine in what way or to what extent I am to carry it out, " he would not be congratulated for his profound insight into the "nature and extent" of the officer's authority. He would likely find himself in the guardhouse for insubordination. The Bible plainly teaches us that its authority is determined exclusively by *Who is speaking* and is not at all dependent on *what* He says (James 2:10,11). The, "Yes, but you said..." back talk shows disobedience not faith. While the Bible recognizes differences of importance in various commandments (Matt. 5:19), it leaves no room at all for differences of authority between any of the things which God has said (v.18). Not a "jot or tittle" of them may be dismissed as lacking authority. This all-important point in the Bible's teaching about its authority drops out of sight when Report 44 tries to accommodate the "second" view.

It is Not Only Saving

The mischievous result of letting the Bible's authority be viewed as dependent on its "content and purpose" becomes more obvious when that is further defined as the "saving revelation of God in Christ Jesus." If that means anything at all, it means that whatever in the Bible is not "saving" therefore lacks authority. The committee has labored long and often to avoid that consequence by arguing that it is all saving. That faces the committee with the impossible task of showing how the Bible's teachings about the judgement and eternal punishment can be exclusively "saving." Although the Bible's message is for salvation, it is not a bit less authoritative in condemning to hell than it is in saving. It is, as the Apostle Paul said (2 Cor. 2:16) "to the one an aroma from death to death, to the other an aroma from life to life." Why should we try to defend the unbiblical, false notion that its authority is only "saving"?

An Open-Ended Fence

Some of the criticisms that have been made of Report 44 have been overstatements. It does not, as has been alleged, deny that the Bible is the Word of God. It says a number of good things, that the Bible must not be made subject to men's scientific opinions and that we must not deny its history, for example. The body of the report contains a number of useful and valuable discussions. The trouble with it is that it is a compromise. As a compromise it contains as the Iowa discussions acknowledged, "ambiguities." It tries to hold to contradictory viewpoints. It was supposed to help the churches understand and hold the Bible's teaching about its authority. Because it tried to accommodate contradictory viewpoints, it has added to their confusion, instead of remedied it. The new 25 pages of further "explanation" make that even more obvious than it was. One might say that Report 44 was supposed to be a "fence" to keep out of the church heresies that threaten its faith and life. Despite the fact that some parts of it are well-built, they do little good because the document, accommodating also the "second" point of view, leaves openings at its beginnings and its end for the very things it was supposed to keep out of the churches. This "fence" is open at both ends.

The Report's Failure in the Churches' Life

The experiences of the churches in the last dozen years have been amply demonstrating the failure, or worse than failure, of this report. It has been used to protect the kind of errors it was supposed to exclude. That was evident immediately after it was adopted. The same synod which adopted it, with a reference to it, dismissed the objections of Holland's Central Avenue Church against Dr. Willis De Boer's treatment of Genesis 1-11. Later we had to object to Dr. Allen Verhey's questioning and denying the reality of the serpent in Genesis 3 and of the earthquake in Matthew 28. We cited these as violations of Report 44's warning "against the use of any method of biblical interpretation which excludes or calls into question...the event-character...of biblical history, thus compromising the full authority of Scripture as the Word of God" (*Acts 1972*, p. 69). Mrs. L. Vanden Heuvel in our September 1981 *Outlook* (pp.8-10) pointed out that Dr. Verhey and his defenders appealed to the same part of the same report. Her remarks are appropriate. "Notice that all Synod is requiring of Biblical interpreters (ministers, professors, teachers) is that they maintain the 'event character' and 'revelational meaning' of biblical history. There is *nothing* stated about the *descriptions* or *reporting* of these events. Thus the door is left wide open for the rejection of these details."

"It is not hard to see why Report 44 covered Dr. Verhey. He does not reject the event of the fall and resurrection. He just calls into serious question the descriptive details. If all the CRC is going to demand of its leaders is a commitment to the *events* of Scripture, leaving all the details open for grabs, we are bound for disaster and certainly we are already experiencing it." (In this connection I pointed out in a footnote that Dr. Verhey subjected not merely details, but even the resurrection to his critical method. ("While this does not deny the resurrection it does make, not only incidental details, but the event itself historically debatable.")

The Historical Critical Method

What is really involved in this matter is whether or not we tolerate the use of the "historical critical method" of interpreting the Bible. Accepting that method has been a primary factor in destroying the faith of many Christian churches throughout the world in the last 200 years. (Its devastating history has been well and clearly traced in the little book published by Concordia, *The End of the Historical Critical Method*, by Gerhard Maier.) Our churches rejected it when they fired its proponent, Dr. Ralph Janssen from our seminary in 1922. Now, under Report 44, we are, in fact, tolerating it with a few words of caution against carrying it "too far." What is stirring up endless trouble among us is that nobody has clearly defined what is supposed to be "too far." The real trouble with the method, which in fact arose and arises out of an unbelieving approach to the Bible, is not that it is carried "too far," but that it comes from and proceeds in an exactly wrong direction. An unbelieving approach can never build Christian faith.

Church Destruction by Historical Criticism

The destructive effects of using the historical critical method on the Bible are being clearly demonstrated by further developments in the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands which introduced among us the "second" view of the Bible's authority.

Those churches in 1926 rejected the "critical" approach to the Bible when they deposed Geelkerken for questioning the Genesis story. In 1967 they officially reversed that position. Now they have gone much further in discarding the

Bible's authority. In their document "God Met Ons" the door is wide open to Liberal denials of the Bible. Their loss of Christian morals is equally evident in their welcome to practicing homosexuals and extra-marital sex relations. The deterioration has become so plain that even our badly divided churches have felt compelled to break off most of our traditional relations with them.

Stop Compromising the Bible's Authority

The meaning of all of this for us is obvious. Our churches' faith in the Bible as God's Word is being rapidly eroded just as that has been destroyed in many others, notably the old mother churches in the Netherlands. Report 44 was supposed to help us take a stand against this movement and maintain and promote the Biblical faith. It has failed in that purpose, and it has, in practice even been used as a tool to help destroy that faith. Why has it turned out to be such a failure? Instead of opposing the attacks on the Bible's authority, it has sought to achieve a satisfactory compromise with them. It deliberately avoided identifying the actual false views and naming names of those who were advancing them. It argued that by speaking only in generalities it could be briefer and more effective. The churches in our time are facing a life-and-death battle against those who are attacking the Word of God. Report 44 which was supposed to help us, deliberately tried to avoid aiming at particular targets or even embarassing individuals who hold opposing views. No battle can ever be won by that kind of tactic. Although the Bible teaches us to be kind, it also forbids us to compromise with error or evil. In its treatment of its authority as God's Word it never leaves room for us to compromise provided the erring "doesn't go too far." The warning words with which the Scriptures come to an end must resound in our hearts and determine our behavior and course. "I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them God shall add to him the plagues which are written in this book: and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book" (Rev. 22:18,19).

A Helpful Explanation

Is this subject of the Bible's authority so complicated that a 12 year-old 53-page document had to increase confusion, and a new 25-page explanation can't help but make it worse? The subject isn't that complicated. The Orthodox Presbyterian Churches fourteen years ago faced the same question our churches did. They tried to say without any compromise what the Bible said. They said it simply and clearly in less than one page. At their 1970 General Assembly they said:

> (1) *The Inspiration of Scripture.* In the production of Scripture God employed men, and he did so without violence to the full range and integrity of their personalities. The mode of biblical inspiration places the church before a deep mystery which gives rise to continuing reflection upon the way in which the human writers function. The validity of these observations is beyond question. Indeed, it is just this careful attention to the writing of the various authors in all their respective individuality and particularity which serves to disclose in all the richness of its diversity the organic character of the unity of biblical revelation. Nevertheless, all such reflection must remain within and be controlled by the recognition that in the most proper sense of the word God is the final and sole author of the text of Scripture. It is striking that when Scripture itself explicitly conjoins the activity of God and men in the production of Scripture, it does so for the express purpose of subordinating the function of the human-writers that it may thereby magnify the divine origin and character of what is written. In the words of the Report, "The real author of the Bible is the Holy Spirit, who employed the prophets and apostles as his organs, and since the action of the Holy Spirit in inspiration was pervasive, the Bible is wholly divine in all its parts and in all its elements, in its forms of expression as well as in the contents of its teaching. In short, the Bible is the absolutely reliable and authoritative Word of the Most High God" (*Acts*, 1958, p. 49).
>
> (2) *The Authority of Scripture.* Holy Scripture ought at all times to be obeyed without reservation. At the same time, the church's obedient response is not the measure of biblical authority. It is not the case that Scripture is authoritative only insofar as its message is obeyed, or only by virtue of the fact that it functions authoritatively. It must always be recognized that the ongoing activity of the Holy Spirit in the church is not "the authority-imparting factor" (p. 46). It does not make Scripture authoritative. Rather this witnessing activity compels a recognition of the authority antecedently inherent in the text of Scripture because God is its author. Until that day when her Lord returns, the Church will continue to be faced with perplexing questions in her concern to be obedient to the authority of Scripture. But what will remain certain and must ever serve as an immovable point of reference in this concern is the conviction that Scripture possesses authority because God is its author so that the authority of the text is nothing less than the absolute and irrefragable authority of the Most High God.
>
> Any notion of the authority of Scripture in disjunction from its content and purpose is a meaningless abstraction. Indeed, the authority of Scripture is the authority of redemptive revelation; its central purpose is to lead sinners to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ and to bring them into willing subjection to his Lordship. Nevertheless, that authority ultimately derives from and is grounded in not the message of Scripture but God its author. Together with the report we affirm in the word of the Westminster Confession of Faith: "The authority of the Holy Scriptures, for which it ought to be believed, and obeyed, dependeth not upon the testimony of any man, or Church; but wholly upon God (who is truth itself) the author thereof: and therefore it is to be received, because it is the Word of God" (I,iv).

Respectfully submitted,
George W. Knight, III
Norman Shepherd
Richard B. Gaffin, Jr. (Chairman)

On motion the report was adopted for transmission to the other members of the Reformed Ecumenical Synod. ●

Predestination (1)

Cornelis Pronk

No doctrine has been more opposed, misrepresented, or caricatured than the doctrine of predestination. To mention it to some people is like waving the proverbial red flag before an enraged bull. One reason why many people are so opposed to predestination is because they simply do not know what this doctrine is. Such ignorance is not surprising if one considers the almost complete lack of Bible knowledge, even among professing Christians.

Anyone who is familiar with Scripture, however, should know that the main theme from Genesis to Revelation is the sovereign rule of God over everything that happens in the universe. To say it in other words, the message of the Bible is that behind all apparent confusion of this world lies the eternal counsel or plan of God. That plan concerns the perfecting of a people called Israel, and the restoring of a world lost in sin, by means of the sacrifice of Christ, the Son of God. God governs human affairs with this end in view, and human history is a record of the out-working of His purposes. That God has a plan should not surprise anyone. Don't we all make plans before we set out to do something? Regardless of how some people may reject predestination, in theory all of us in our everyday life are practical predestinarians.

Before an architect begins with the actual construction of his edifice, he makes his blueprints on which he marks every minute detail. Before the first stone is laid, the complete building already exists in the architect's mind. The more complex the enterprise, the more necessary it is to have a good plan; otherwise everything will end in failure. If this is true of man, why should it be different with God? I for one, cannot conceive of God bringing into existence this whole complex universe without a plan covering every minute detail.

But whether I can conceive of this or not is not important, of course. What is decisive is that Scripture clearly shows that God indeed has such an all-encompassing plan. The Bible calls this His counsel. In Isaiah 46:9 and 10 we read: *I am God and there is none like me; declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done.* This counsel or plan of God is also unchangeable. *My counsel shall stand and I will do all my pleasure. . .yea, I have spoken, and I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed, I will also do it* (Isa. 46:10,11).

Many more Scripture passages could be cited to prove that God has indeed a definite plan which embraces everything. When I say everything, I mean just that. There are no exceptions. Everything, no matter what it is, has been fixed and determined in God's counsel. This is not fatalism, as is often charged. In the next article some of the objections which are raised against predestination will be dealt with. Now, however, we limit ourselves to a positive statement of this doctrine. All things are foreordained by God including man's salvation or damnation. If all things are planned by God, man's salvation or damnation cannot be exempt from this rule.

Lest anyone think that predestination is based only on logical inference and deductions, let me hasten to add that it is plainly taught by Scripture. The Bible makes it abundantly clear that when some men are saved and others are lost, neither of these two things comes as a surprise to God. Both come to pass because He has planned them. I can imagine that at this point someone will say, "I cannot accept that. The idea that God would determine in advance who is going to be saved and who is not is something I just cannot accept." I am not surprised at this reaction. The doctrine of God's sovereignty in salvation has never been popular with man, by nature. Because this doctrine humbles man, he will either reject predestination altogether or explain it in such a way that it becomes more palatable.

The Arminian says, "Predestination is taught by Scripture, but what does it mean? It means nothing more than that God has predestined to salvation those whom He knew would believe in Christ. God knows beforehand what the choice is going to be, but He does not determine that choice."

This view is widely held. The decision whether or not a man will be saved, is made to depend ultimately on man, not on God. Calvinists reject this view. The issue before us is this: Is a man predestined by God to salvation because he believes in Christ, or is he enabled to believe in Christ because he is predestined? Don't say this is a purely academic question or a theological subtlety. I am convinced this is a very important question which concerns the well-being of the Church.

Let us turn to the Bible, our final court of appeal. If anything is clear, already in the Old Testament, it is that God is sovereign in all matters, including salvation. Scripture knows nothing of a God Who foreknows, but Who does not foreordain. Nowhere in the Old Testament do we meet a God Who has to wait until man has made up his mind to choose for or against Him. On the contrary, God is described as the absolute Master of the human heart. Jeremiah says that God can change hearts, taking the old heart out and putting a new one in its place. This is a symbolic way of saying that man's actions, springing from his heart, do not lie outside of God's plan, but form an integral part of it. God, according to the Old Testament, is King, and He is King with an absolute sovereignty which admits to no qualifications or exceptions whatsoever.

It is in the exercise of that absolute sovereignty that God chose Israel. His choice of that people was not due to any greatness in that people. Only sovereign grace singled her out from many other nations. This applies also to the salvation of individuals—they are saved only by sovereign grace. This is very clear from the New Testament.

Jesus offered salvation. Some accepted it and some turned away. Why? Simply because the former decided for Christ and the latter against Him? Our Lord Himself supplies the answer. *I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight.*

Do you hear it? It seemed good in God's sight. There, according to Christ, lies the ultimate reason why some received a saving knowledge of God and some did not.

The same doctrine is taught in the book of Acts. Why was it that some believed Paul's message, while others rejected it? Because some made the right decisions and others did not? Certainly, this is part of it, but ultimately it was God Who gave faith to some, while withholding it from others. Let me quote the exact words of Luke. *As many as were ordained to eternal life believed* (Acts 13:48). Here we have the doctrine of predestination in a nutshell. Only those people who believed were predestinated to salvation. They were not predestinated because they believed, but they were enabled to believe because they were predestinated.

This fundamental truth, namely that God's choice is never based on anything in man, is illustrated even more clearly in Romans 9. Speaking of Jacob and Esau, Paul says: *For the children being not yet born, neither having done anything good or bad, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth, it was said unto her* (Rebecca), *the elder shall serve the younger. Even as it is written, Jacob I love, but Esau I hated.*

But is this fair? Is this just? Doesn't Paul attribute partiality to God? These are only some of the objections which have been and are still being raised against predestination. Paul deals with these objections in Romans 9:14-24, summing it all up in verse 20: *Nay, but O man, who art thou that repliest against God?*

I realize that what I have said thus far is very incomplete. Lest anyone should have misunderstood predestination, let me say what it does not mean. Predestination does not mean that when God chooses some rather than others to salvation, He does so arbitrarily and without a good reason, mysterious though the reason may be to us. It does not mean either that God takes pleasure in the death of a sinner, or that the door of grace is closed to anyone who will enter in.

Spurgeon says in one of his sermons on election:

> I frequently meet people who are fretting and worrying themselves about this thought—What if I should not be elect! O sir, they say, I know I put my trust in Jesus; I know I believe in His name and trust in His blood; but what if I should not be elect? Poor dear creature! You do not know much about the gospel, or you would never talk so, for he that believes is elect. Those who are elect, are elect unto faith in Christ, and if you have faith you are one of God's elect... If you, as a sinner, look to Jesus...and say:
>
> Nothing in my hands I bring,
> Simply to the cross I cling,
>
> you are elect... You were loved of God from before the foundation of the world, for you would not do that unless God had given you the power, and had chosen you to do it.

Is Christ your only hope for salvation? Do you believe in Him? Have no fear. You are one of God's chosen people. *For by grace are ye saved through faith: and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God. Not of works, lest any man should boast (Eph. 2:8-9).* ●

Rev. Cornelis Pronk is the pastor of the Free Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan. This is one of a series of radio broadcasts in January and February 1983 on the Five Points of Calvinism.

What Is a Reformed Ministry Today ?

Anthony R. Dallison

Rev. Anthony R. Dallison B. D. is a Presbyterian minister at Box 1064, King City, Ontairo, Canada L0G 1K0. This address which he sent to us was given at a conference in Glasgow, Scotland, September 6, 1975.

"When I use a word," said Humpty Dumpty to Alice on her journey through Wonderland, "it means just what I choose it to mean — neither more nor less."

Many evangelicals in the churches today take this sort of approach to the term "Reformed." Indeed, there is such confusion over the meaning of this word that many people, even in Presbyterian and Reformed churches, see little difference between holding a general evangelical position and subscribing to the Reformed Faith.

The task assigned to men then, is one of definition in the first place. What is the Reformed Faith? How is it to be defined? And then there follows from the definition an application of this distinctive position to the work of the ministry in the Church today. Obviously, in a paper of this kind one cannot enter into every aspect of the Reformed position, but a few aspects which relate particularly to the Christian ministry in our times may be singled out for special attention.

I. Commitment to a Distinctive Theology

The first matter with which we must reckon is surely this one: that a Reformed Ministry is committed to a distinctive theological position.

The Reformed Faith has a distinctive theology: preeminently it is the biblical theology derived from the Scriptures and, viewed historically, the synthesis of that biblical theology which has been given expression in the great Confessions of the Reformation churches (e.g. the Scots Confession, the Westminster Confession etc.). This much is apparent from the term 'Reformed' itself: it is the faith of the Church 're-formed' from its errors in accordance with the Word of God.

The distinctive theological position to which a "Reformed" ministry is committed can be summed up simply in this way:

It is distinctive in its doctrine of God. While all Christians are agreed upon the nature of God as Triune, it is the Reformed faith alone which safeguards the high doctrine of God's sovereignty as the only explanation of evil as well as good in the world, and the reason why some men are left in their sin and impenitence while others are awakened to spiritual life in Christ. In a true sense, it is the Reformed faith alone, in its doctrine of the God-head, which lets God be God, without any qualification or diminution of His sovereign power and glory.

It is distinctive in its view of man. Again, while all Christians are agreed that man is a sinner, differences become apparent when the extent of that sinfulness is discussed in the light of Scripture. There are those (Roman Catholic and Protestant) who believe that man, in spite of his fallenness, is able to will and do some good. But the Reformed Christian receives the teaching of Scripture that the natural man can do nothing that is spiritual, for he is not merely spiritually sick but "dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2:1-5).

It is distinctive in regard to salvation. While all Christians believe that the purpose of salvation is the enjoyment, ultimately, of the bliss of heaven, there are those who believe that it is possible for a man to be saved and then finally lost again. The Reformed position, however, emphasizes that salvation is secure: God not only hopes to have heaven full, but the Scriptures show clearly that Christ can never lose any single one of the "elect" for whom He has died.

To be "Reformed," then, is to embrace a distinctive theological position involving particular theological views of God, man, the work of Christ and salvation. My contention is that this position, consistently held, is bound to show itself in the life of the Reformed minister. These are not small matters of difference from other theological positions — they are profound in their implications for every area of Christian life and work. They affect one's preaching, one's worship, one's evangelism and one's doctrine of the Church, and I will be saying more on these subjects later in this paper.

Suffice it to say, then, that Reformed theology is all-embracing and comprehensive in its scope, the only-full orbed, consistent, thoroughly and searchingly biblical theology in the world. It is much more than merely the famous 'Five Points' (total depravity, the unconditional character of election, particular atonement, the irresistibility of the divine grace, the perseverance of the people of God). Calvinism is not satisfied with adherence to Scripture at these points alone, as though this were all it had to say. No sphere is strange to it: it demands that every part of life, every area of theology, every element of human experience, be subjected to the divine authority.

There are three qualifications which I want to introduce at this point to safeguard what I have said from misinterpretation:

(1) We are not saying that doctrine, by itself, saves. It is Christ alone who saves. But we must remember that it is the truth which sets men free. The truth is in Christ: He is the truth. But God has given to us the truths, the doctrines, the great facts about himself in the Word, and our apprehension of Christ through that Word, by which we are guided, directed and instructed.

We maintain then, that there is no division here. Christ alone saves: but the plan of salvation is given to us in His Word. As Reformed Christians, we believe that the "Five Points" are like five great pillars of truth upon which rests the salvation of men. To hold less than these cardinal truths would mean that we are less than Presbyterian and Reformed according to our Church Standards: to tamper with any one of them would be to call in question the full scripturalness of one's faith.

The effect, then, of the Reformed position in its theological distinctives is to underline, guard and define the gracious character of redemption: that it is all of God; that there is no place for a theology of "works;" and that from beginning to end, we have nothing to contribute, nothing to offer, but that the Lord does it all.

(2) On the other hand, we are not saying that confessional formulation in the sixteenth or seventeenth century has a measure of finality for the Church. We are not implying that the Westminster Confession (or any other Confession) has said "the last word." All confessions suffer from at least three limitations:

(a) They are conditioned historically to some extent by the particular circumstances which led to their formulation. That is, the issues with which they deal in particular may not be the same issues of importance which face the Church at a later time. A truth of Scripture may be inadequately or imperfectly stated, or a matter of doctrine may have been entirely omitted in a particular Confession.

(b) Because a Confession is a human document, it suffers from human fallibility. We may never assign to a Confession the infallibility which belongs to Scripture alone.

(c) There is the aspect of the progressive understanding of the faith delivered to the saints by the illuminating work of the Holy Spirit. On this principle, no age of the Church has a complete understanding of the mind of God.

But, given these factors, it must be said that the Reformed Confessions of the 16th and 17th centuries are remarkable for their faithfulness to Scripture on almost every issue with which they deal. The way forward for doctrinal renewal in the Church is not to despise and set aside the accumulated fruits of the Church's understanding of Scripture formulated in these great confessional documents, but instead to build upon what is already there. (It may be of interest to note that the late Professor John Murray indicates how this may be done in a chapter on "The Theology of the Westminster Confession" in *Scripture and Confession* (Presbyterian and Reformed Pub. Co., 1973).

(3) It must be asserted that the charge often laid against Calvinists, that they are inhibited from proclaiming the "free offer" of the Gospel, cannot be sustained. The same is true with regard to the alleged denial of human responsibility which, it is said, a Calvinist position must imply. We believe in the "free offer" of the Gospel and we find no contradiction between a salvation which is 'all of grace' and accountability on the part of those to whom salvation is offered. This position is clearly formulated in a number of Reformed Confessions: perhaps one of the clearest statements is found in the celebrated Canons of Dort (III-IV/8), "As many as are called by the Gospel are unfeignedly called; for God hath most earnestly and truly declared in His Word what will be acceptable to Him, namely, that all who are called should comply with the invitation. He, moreover, seriously promises eternal life and rest to as many as shall come to Him, and believe on Him."

II. The Church: A Distinctive Congregational Life

Second, a Reformed ministry will express itself in a distinctive congregational life. It will affect the way a local church lives and worships and conducts itself.

(i) This will show itself in the *preaching of the Word.* We do not need to be reminded that belief in the Scriptures as the inspired and infallible Word of God has declined in the life of the Church generally, and as a result the eloquence and power of the proclamation of the Word have diminished too.

I heard the situation described vividly in this way recently. In the context of a panel discussion between a rabbi, a priest and a Protestant minister, the rabbi stood up and said, "I speak according to the law of Moses." The priest said, "I speak according to the Church." The clergyman rose to his feet and said, "It seems to me..."

For a Reformed ministry, the preaching of the Word is a paramount responsibility. What the Church needs today is a profound understanding of the doctrines contained in Scripture and a fearless proclamation of them. By this, we mean not simply the so-called "basic" (or evangelistic) doctrines, but all doctrines, especially those relating to the sovereignty and grace of God.

In a recent article in *Christianity Today* magazine (Dec. 20th, 1974), James Montgomery Boice had this to say:

> "Paul exhorted the young man Timothy to preach sound doctrine, that is, to preach all the themes that Paul had taught him...He wrote, "I charge thee therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, Who shall judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: preach the Word, be diligent in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and patience" (II Tim. 4:1-2). "The things which thou hast heard from me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also" (2:2).

"Are these weighty exhortations being followed today? Generally not, I fear. Pick up the Saturday paper listing the sermon topics for the next day in some city. The crisis in the Middle East will be discussed. There will probably be sermons on the problems of race, the economy, Sino-American relations and other current matters. Many ministers will be expounding on some biblical story. Many will be using a text to bring in an essay on ethics. But where in this long list are the titles of those expositional sermons that set forth the themes of God's sovereignty in all human affairs, His grace to the undeserving, His love, His hatred of sin, the nature and specific object of the Atonement, irresistible grace, the keeping power of God, repentance, forgiveness,

God's plan for the ages, the plans and ultimate defeat of Satan, the imminent return of the Lord Jesus Christ, and so forth?"

Where are these themes being dealt with today? Preaching, in the Reformed tradition, is never a brief essay by a minister on some religious topic. Preaching is the exposition and application of the Word of God. It is the chief means in the congregation for accomplishing the building-up of the saints and the conversion of sinners. For that reason there can be no compromise with modern replacements and alternatives to the Word of God preached. It cannot be supplanted with dialogues, discussions, testimonies, concerts, "hymn" services or anything else.

In preaching, then, the Reformed Minister will be aware of the high conception of his work before the Lord and will not suffer himself to be turned aside from this paramount calling to be a "Minister of the Word." Correspondingly, there should be evidenced in the congregation a growing awareness of the worth of such a ministry and a response to it. The congregation that dislikes preaching or seeks to inhibit its Minister in this part of his work—or shows its preference for a less demanding form of preaching—shows itself to be something less than Reformed.

Reformed preaching, then, is preaching indeed, because it is theological in nature and subject to the biblical revelation. It is powerful because it addresses men and women with the claims of the triune God and with the truths of His own Word, and because it expresses, too, the care and earnestness with which ministers watch over their flocks.

(ii) Second, a Reformed ministry will express itself by evincing a deep concern for *the government and discipline of the local congregation.*

I believe that this has been a cardinal failure of evangelicals in our own Church of Scotland for many generations. They have been concerned—and rightly—with preaching and with the recovery of biblical ministry within the Church government and discipline to which attention should also have been directed. To be consistently Reformed involves our concern in these areas as well.

By *government,* I mean rule within a local congregation. It raises the subject of the choice, training and ministry of Ruling Elders.

We are living in times when much of the glory of the Ruling Eldership and its continuing usefulness to the Church has been lost sight of and needs urgently to be recovered. We are all aware of the widespread neglect of real pastoral work throughout the Church which should be undertaken, in the main, by the Eldership. How can we redress this situation?

It is my contention that a prime place should be given in a Reformed ministry to the choice, training and ministry of Ruling Elders. We are a Presbyterian Church: we are committed to the principle of rule by Elders ("presbuteroi") and to the principle of parity (equality) of office. The pastoral care and rule of a congregation is not a "one-man" task: it is a shared task, and if the system were made to work as it should work, we have in the Presbyterian system the finest provision for effective evangelism and pastoral care that any Christian denomination could wish to possess!

I offer the following guidelines:

We must seek suitably qualified men for the office believing that the urgency of the times requires the raising up of godly men for such great work of Christian ministry. They should be converted men who meet the qualifications listed in I Timothy 3 and Titus 1.

These men must be painstakingly trained for their work. They must be instructed in the doctrine of the Church; the biblical grounds for the office and work of the Ruling Elder; the Minister must take pains to see that they are fully acquainted with the Westminster Confession of Faith and that they understand that their Church is a confessional and Reformed Church. The great work of the pastoral care of the flock must be carefully explained and inculcated—visitation, preferably with Bible reading and prayer in each home; the duties of examining each new member for admission to the Church; the exercise of discipline over the erring and the lapsed.

The Minister must encourage the new Elder by a visual example of his own pastoral care of the flock and for this purpose he should endeavor to accompany the Elder on his first visit to a district to guide, support and encourage him.

It will be a long task to restore the Eldership to its rightful place and practice in the contemporary Church, but it must be attempted.

(b) Then, the matter of *discipline*. A Reformed ministry will be deeply concerned about the state of affairs generally in the Church and it will address itself to the matter in the following ways at least:

(1) The admission of new members. Recognizing that the Lord's vineyard has been laid waste to a great extent through the neglect, over the years, in proper instruction of, and discipline over, those who apply for membership in the Church, a Minister will wish to be very careful indeed over this matter. I illustrate from my own practice in my present congregation. Intending new members are required to meet weekly for almost three months where basic instruction is given in biblical doctrine. The opportunity is given at any time throughout the course for a candidate to withdraw. One or two Christian Elders are present from time to time, and these Elders (appointed by the Kirk Session) then join with the Minister at the end of the course to interview each candidate individually. The interview may last up to an hour in each case: we examine each one on his understanding of basic Christian doctrine, the Christian life, the Church and its constitution, the Sacraments, the devotional life etc. In the event of any doubt being entertained by the Elders or Minister, we do not hesitate to recommend to the applicant that we cannot at this time recommend the Kirk Session to approve membership.

Again, the way ahead for the recovery of proper standards for admission to membership is a long one—but a start must be made.

(2) The discipline of the lapsed. No Minister is without this agonizing problem. But no Reformed Minister can contemplate leaving a situation without redress which is dishonoring the great King and Head of the Church. There is no easy and painless solution in the light of today's landslide into nominal membership. I suggest, however, that the very least measure which would be consistent with a Reformed ministry is to urge the Kirk Session towards a visitation of lapsed members with a view to their restoration, if possible, otherwise the prospect of discipline by removal of membership. To leave the situation as it is at present would be to leave a festering sore in the visible Church which will simply grow and infect a larger and larger area.

(3) Third, a Reformed ministry will also be concerned about *the piety of Church members*.

We would expect that commitment to Reformed distinctives should produce a special and distinctive form of Chris-

tian living in its recipients. The expectation is surely a reasonable one, yet it must be said that seldom do we find congregations which are clearly identified by Reformed piety flowing from instruction in the Reformed Faith. In a real sense, I believe, the effectiveness of our ministries is being shown continually by the extent to which the influence of the Word preached is being shown in the day-to-day lives of our members in their own homes.

We would surely expect to see at least the following marks.

It is a piety that centers upon the home and family. This arises naturally from the place that the Covenant holds in our spiritual heritage. The visible Church embraces believers "together with their children" (Westminster Confession, Chapter 25, Section II). So that family worship (as distinct from the value and importance of private devotion, which is stressed by evangelicals generally) is regarded as vital by Reformed Christians. The recovery of this distinctive form of the Reformed piety is never more necessary than in the present time of crisis among youth and alienation within families, together with the widespread ignorance among the young concerning spiritual things.

It is a piety that springs from the root of a clear apprehension of the majesty and glory of God. In contrast to the flippancy and lightness that characterizes much of the evangelical's approach to God, the Reformed Christian will approach Him with reverence and filial fear, never using words or forms of expression which tend to our becoming 'excessively familiar' with God.

It will be a well-informed piety. The Reformed Christian will be one who is encouraged to read widely, according to his ability, in theology and Church history and who will be aware of the great issues of our own times as they confront the Church's witness in the world today. It should be the aim of a Reformed ministry to produce this type of Christian, whose spiritual faculties are alive to the fact that he is a member of world wide Church and that his responsibilities in prayer, stewardship and active Christian work reach far beyond the immediate confines of his own situation and congregation.

(4) Fourth, a Reformed ministry will be concerned with *scriptural evangelism.*

There has been a great deal of thinking about evangelism in our own generation. Much of this concern has been stimulated by the often disappointed results of "mass" evangelism, or by concern about how 'ecumenical' evangelism can be allowed to become before forfeiting the essential Gospel. The question of the place of the "entertainment" element in evangelism has been a source of conflicting discussion, and perhaps a further factor in the debate has been the rediscovery by many Christians of the Puritan and Reformed teaching on evangelism. All these factors have re-awakened interest.

The charge has often been laid against Calvinists that they have not shown sufficient interest in the preaching of the Gospel to the unconverted and in missionary work. There is no doubt that this charge has been true of some Calvinists in some periods of Church history (e.g. the days of the reign of Moderatism in our own Church.) But it is noteworthy that much of the earliest missionary work following the Reformation was done by Calvinists, and that some of the greatest preachers of the Gospel (such as George Whitefield and C.H. Spurgeon) have been great Calvinists.

A Reformed ministry today will be deeply concerned about evangelism. Scriptural evangelism, its recovery and reinstatement in the Church is a paramount need. The Reformed Minister will find his theology of evangelism rooted in the biblical doctrine of God—the God who is Creator and Judge of men, holy and righteous in character and whose character is expressed in His holy law. It will also be rooted in the biblical doctrine of man as a sinner: the Reformed Minister cannot regard man as sick and simply in need of moral palliatives to restore him—he must accept the scriptural teaching that the natural man is "dead in trespasses and sins." In so doing, he declares that the only remedy is preaching that depends entirely upon the aid of the Holy Spirit, and that the "type" of Gospel preaching which alone can avail is that which sets forth the character of God, the nature of sin and the objective Atonement of Christ on the Cross.

It should perhaps be added that there will be a deep concern also that the local congregation be actively involved in evangelism since it was the practice of the early Church to engage in evangelism as a Church.

These, then, are four areas of distinction for a Reformed ministry: preaching, the government, and discipline of the local congregation, the piety of the Church members, and scriptural evangelism as a normal function of the Church.

(To Be Continued)

SCHOOL OF LEARNING

I did not know
That I could ever say,
"I thank You, Lord,
For trials sent my way."

I did not know
Nor could I understand
That He would hold me
With His Almighty Hand.

I did not know
How close the Lord could be;
Communion such as this-
A touch of heaven for me.

But now I know
Though I am weak and frail,
I have a loving Savior
Who will surely not fail.

And now I know
His blessed words are true;
What our Lord has promised-
That He will also do.

I did not know
But I can truly say,
"I thank You, Lord,
For trials sent my way."

Annetta Jansen
Dorr, Michigan

The Parables of Our Lord

Henry Vander Kam

The Parable of the Unrighteous Judge and the Widow
Lesson 11 Luke 18:1-8

Both this parable and the following one deal with the subject of prayer. This subject is approached from different sides in each parable. Jesus emphasizes the necessity of persistent prayer in this parable, and in the next one He emphasizes the need for humility in prayer. Prayer is such an important subject for every child of God that he is happy that our Lord has taught as much as He has about this subject. The disciples asked Him about prayer (Lk 11:1) because, though they had prayed since infancy, they had never really learned to pray the way He did. He had communion with His Father. Prayer was natural for Him. Although He would at times spend an entire night in prayer, the prayer He taught His disciples was very brief.

Keep on Praying!

Jesus has introduced this parable by stating exactly what it is to be about. He spoke this parable to them "to the end that they ought always to pray, and not to faint." Perseverance is required in prayer. The believer is not simply to come before the throne of God and leave, and believe that whatsoever request he has made will automatically be granted him. Many times faith is put to the test to see whether or not the individual will come again and again asking for the same thing. Even Jesus prayed the same words several times in the garden of Gethsemane. One thing the believer must bear in mind: He will be heard! God will answer the prayers of His people. We sing: "Give me the patience of unanswered prayer." If the hymn author means that we must sometimes persevere before an answer is given, well; but there is *no* such thing, in the final analysis, as "unanswered prayer." God is not deaf. He is also not heartless. The answer may be "no," but that is also a clear answer!

Perseverance

Not only in prayer, but in various pursuits of life perseverance is necessary. That is often the only way in which we will be able to attain our goals. The Bible sets a high value on perseverance. Paul does not want to take John Mark along on the second missionary journey recalling that he did not stay with the others during the first missionary journey. One cannot depend on such a person. Perseverance is a virtue which is easily understood and highly prized. Only the person who will not be turned aside by the first reverses he suffers is worthy of the trust of others. God also demands this of His people in their prayers.

A Conscienceless Judge

In His inimitable manner of teaching, Jesus makes it crystal clear to everyone who hears or reads this parable how important it is to persist in prayer. He pictures an unrighteous judge in a certain city. The very fact that he is an unrighteous judge is a contradiction in terms. A judge is supposed to uphold the justice on which alone a government, whether local or national, can rest. However, in this world of sin there have been many who were called to uphold justice who have trampled it. The reason why this judge is unrighteous is because he does not fear God, nor does he regard men. This might be taken as an indication that he was impartial. However, that is not the point here. He lives as though there is no God in heaven to Whom he will have to give account, and he does not even care for the opinions of his fellow-men. The law of God plays no part in his life—neither the first nor second table. He not only lives for himself, but he pronounces judgment according to this feeling at that particular time! He has no conscience! Many would still be moved by the power of public opinion. But, this one does not even regard men. This is not only the opinion of others, he himself admits that he fears neither God nor regards men!

When justice is no longer upheld, orderly society comes to a standstill. How can human life continue if there is no justice in the land? How often has God complained during the days of the Old Testament that the judges were not judging righteously? Many have been the judges whose eyes were blinded by bribes! In Israel important matters must not be decided by a single judge. Although Rome prided itself on its system of justice, it allowed one judge to rule even in cases where there was much at stake. Jesus is speaking this parable in the days when Rome ruled Israel, but it is also the time in which the Herods rule!

In that same city was a widow. Nothing is said concerning her poverty, although the poverty of widows had become proverbial in that time. This widow had been wronged. Jesus does not tell us what the wrong was because that is not relevant to the meaning of this parable. The plight of the widow was that she had no defender when she was wronged. Of necessity she goes to the judge in that city because he is the one who will be able to right her wrong and avenge her of her adversary. That is the duty of this judge. If her case is clear, he must rule in her favor! She has nowhere else to turn and appeals to him again and again! He has no conscience and no sense of ethics and refuses to listen. The case is not described for us in this parable, but Jesus makes it unmistakably clear that she is in the right yet she is repeatedly rebuffed. What a disappointment!

The Bible often speaks of the proper way the widows and orphans are to be treated. The whole fabric of society unravels if they are exploited. James says, "Pure religion and undefiled before our God and Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world." Only a judge who does not fear God and has no regard for man could harden himself against the pleas of such a widow.

Persistence Pays Even with the Unjust

This goes on for some time. The widow soon discovers that she is dealing with a judge who is not worthy of the name. Yet, she persists. Because she persists, the judge begins to have second thoughts about the matter. Not because his sense of justice or his conscience plagues him; but because he is

annoyed. A woman who will persist the way this widow does may be capable of making more trouble. She has been "troubling" him. If he does not act in her favor, she might "wear me out by her continual coming." The judge finally decides to avenge her. This is the easiest way out for him. Thus, even an unjust judge who "fears not God nor regards men," finally gives justice because she persevered! She was finally heard and answered because of her persistence!

God Will Hear

God's people do not come to an unjust judge, but to their Father who is *willing* to give them what they need, and to the Almighty God who is *able* to give them what they need. If an unrighteous judge will finally give in and do justice for a widow who has been bothering him, shall not God avenge His elect who cry to Him day and night? To ask question is to answer it. "He will avenge them speedily."

Is this true? Did not the Old Testament people of God have to wait centuries before their prayer for the Messiah was answered? Do we not at times have to pray for years for our children? Did not Paul pray several times that the "thorn" might be removed from his flesh? These are the questions which face God's people again and again. Yet, says Jesus, "He will avenge them speedily."

Prayer is important in the life of the believer. One who does not pray is not a believer. Ananias is reassured with the words: "Behold he prayeth!" when he is afraid to approach Saul of Tarsis. Man, being made in the image of God, is made in such a way that he must communicate with his God! The saints of the Old Testament were characterized by lives of prayer. There must also be perseverance in prayer. The Old Testament gives a clear illustration of perseverance in Abraham's prayer for Sodom. Abraham becomes somewhat embarrassed when he begins to plead for the wicked cities on the basis of fifty righteous there and finally comes down to ten! But, God is not displeased with his prayer—the trouble is there are not even ten righteous!

God's people must persevere in prayer so that it becomes apparent that they truly desire the things for which they pray. That is the requirement which Jesus lays upon His people. They need not wonder whether God will hear and answer. They must recognize their own responsibility. There is no similarity between the judge of this parable and God. The point at issue is—*perseverance!*

When Christ Returns

At the very close of this parable Jesus seems to interject a new element. "When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" In other words, this parable also deals with those things which must characterize the people of God at the end of time. Is it not a strange question to ask whether He will find faith on the earth when He returns? The faith of God's people will not fail. There will be a church till the end of time. But as many "fall away." He asks "Will He find the kind of faith of which He has been speaking, when He returns?" Will the church have that persevering faith? Will the church begin to pray at the Ascension of Christ and continue until He returns, "Lord Jesus come, yes, come quickly?" Will His people have that kind of faith?

Jesus closes this parable with the above question. Let His people ponder this. This prayer for His return must continue. It is already a long time ago that Jesus left this earth. When will He return? Pray, and He who is the just Judge of men, will answer speedily!

Questions for Discussion

1. Is this element of prayer (perseverance) emphasized enough today? Do we often quickly "give up" if our prayers aren't soon answered as we wish?
2. How can there be an unrighteous judge? Is this injustice characteristic of human society?
3. Is it possible to have rich widows in the church? If there are those, are we still called to treat widows in a special way? Explain.
4. Is it a comfort to believe in election? Why?
5. How should we view the return of Christ? Is it as important as His first coming? Do we have a gospel if we ignore the second coming?

The Parable of the Pharisee and the Publican
Lesson 12 Luke 18:9-14

When the New Testament opens we are confronted with various names with which we were not made familiar in the Old Testament. The New Testament introduces us to the synagogue—the local place where people went to worship. It also speaks of Pharisees, Sadducees and Publicans. None of these had been mentioned in the Old Testament because the names did not exist at that time. This underscores the fact that a considerable amount of time elapsed between the two testaments. During those approximately 400 years, history did not stand still. Not everyone was able to constantly journey to Jerusalsm, and worship and instruction were necessary for the people. Therefore the local synagogues were established. The Romans now ruled the land of Israel and they appointed men from among the Israelites to collect their taxes and manage all that was connected with this work. These tax-collectors or "Publicans" were hated by the people as traitors to their country and religion.

Pharisees and Sadducees

In the Jewish religious world of that time two main groups had come to light. Although there were also "scribes," students of the law, already named in the Old Testament, the two main groups of leaders were now the Pharisees and the Sadducees. The latter were the liberal leaders. They took the teachings of the Scriptures rather lightly. They believed in no resurrection, angels or spirits (Matt. 22:23; Acts 23:8). Not only did the Pharisees believe in all of these, but they sought even to "improve" on the Scriptures of the Old Testament. They gave the impression of being very religious but Jesus' words of scorn were directed to them more than any others. They were so "straight" that they added many rules and regulations to the Old Testament teachings. On the whole, they were held in honor by the people, but Jesus sees through their hypocrisy. He now tells them a parable in which a Pharisee plays a leading role.

Jesus had also referred to the Pharisees time and again in the Sermon on the Mount. He had there made it clear to the people that these leaders were only interested in the externals of religion and that it never touched their hearts. The Pharisees had given their interpretations of the various commandments and Jesus places His "But I say unto You" over against their interpretation. If the people would follow the teaching of the Pharisees, they would be led completely astray. He goes so far, later in His ministry, as to call them a "generation of vipers," and "whited sepulchres." They have "taken away the key of knowledge." They will not

enter the kingdom themselves and will hinder others from entering. They place all the emphasis on the externals and forget the most important things.

The Publicans, as has been said, were considered to be traitors to their own nation seeing they were in the employ of the hated Romans. They were named in one breath with "sinners." The two, the Pharisee and the Publican, form the great contrast which Jesus is drawing for us in this parable. The one was an honored member of the community and the other was despised. Both of these go up to the temple to pray! The temple was apparently not only for the public worship of the whole people, but was also open for the individual to come to pray. Jesus had called the temple "the house of prayer" and it is, therefore, entirely proper that both come to this place to utter their prayers. Neither of the two stays in one of the outer courts, but both seem to come into the main hall of the temple—the Pharisee is able to see the Publican.

Contrasting Prayers: The Pharisee

Our Lord now contrasts the prayers which these men pray. The Pharisee seems to go to a place where he will be visible to all that come into the temple. His "prayer" is strange. He addresses God, but, says Jesus, he prayed *with* or *to himself.* In other words, it is no prayer at all! He simply comes to give God a *report*! Jesus is speaking in this parable about those who trusted in themselves and despised everyone else. That is the picture of this Pharisee.

He is self-satisfied. He is thankful (?) that he is not as other men. He mentions the violators of the 6th, 7th, and 8th commandments. He doesn't do such things! He is careful not to speak of the 9th and 10th commandments and, of course, he has left out the whole first table of the law. This is the kind of interpretation of the law which Jesus had condemned in the Sermon on the Mount. This Pharisee believes that he is living a blameless life. Why does he not make confession? He believes he has nothing to confess! God ought to be very happy that he has such a stalwart son teaching His people!

According to the teaching of Jesus, the law could be summarized in one word: love, both to God and to one's neighbor. The Pharisee shows that he has no love for his fellow-man. He thanks God that he is not as others. If that is too general, he will particularize his sentiments, and give thanks that he is not as that Publican who is also in the temple and is coming to the throne of God at the same time. This attitude reveals a total lack of love for others. How can he be a shepherd of the people of God?

But, there is more! He is not only negative in his prayer by saying that he is not as others; he is also positively showing God in how far he is superior to the others. He fasts twice a week! The law required a fast *once a year!* He does one hundred times better than the law required! Leviticus 16:29ff shows us what the law required concerning this matter. If he does so much more than the law requires, he should surely receive the commendation of God! He also brings tithes of everything he gets. Christ later refers to those who even bring tithes of garden herbs! This is that kind of person. He is not satisfied with keeping the law, he will go far beyond it. His statements were rather mild when he said that he was not like others! He is so far different—one would say that they don't belong to the same people!

This is the way the Pharisee prayed. The Pharisees were the teachers of the people. They no doubt taught the people to pray like this. Is it any wonder that the disciples come to Jesus and ask Him: "Lord teach us to pray"? Is Jesus speaking a parable or is He simply stating an historic fact? How common was it for the people of His day to pray the way this Pharisee did?

The Publican

However, all Israel has not been led in this way. There is also a Publican who comes into the temple to pray. "He stood afar," says Jesus. One gets the impression that he is in the temple, but is standing near the back door. He does not care to be seen by others. He has come here to pray because his need drove him here. He stands afar and cries out: "God, be thou merciful to me a sinner." Here is a man who knows himself as a lost son of Israel unless there is intervention on the part of God Himself. He realizes his sinful condition. This did not all spring from the fact that he was a Publican, but rather, because he is a son of Adam! Only the light from above gives the knowledge of sin. He realizes how great his sin and misery is. He may well have been excommunicated from the synagogue, because he is a Publican. He has no where else to go! He need not go to such a leader in Israel as this Pharisee for comfort. He comes to his God and pours out his heart in one short statement. Here is a man who is filled with grief and sorrow for the sin he has committed. He keeps beating upon his breast. *That's* where the trouble lies—in his heart. This knowledge of sin has so filled his heart with shame that he does not dare raise his eyes to heaven! He has been his own greatest enemy. He has sinned. "Oh God, forgive!"

This man came with the sacrifice of a broken heart. This is well-pleasing to God (cf. Psalm 51). That's where conversion has to begin. However, that is not enough. Broken hearts, by themselves, do not earn forgiveness nor salvation. But, with that broken heart he seeks expiation, forgiveness. He calls for the mercy of God. This will be of free grace! But, the God of the Bible does not despise the broken and contrite heart.

Contrasting Answers

Jesus says: this man went down to his house justified rather than the other, and then gives the reason for this: "for everyone that exalteth himself shall be humbled; but he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." In other words, the prayer of the Publican was answered but the so-called prayer of the Pharisee was not. Why? No answer was necessary to the "prayer" of the Pharisee! This Publican can go home in the confidence that his God has heard him and answered him.

The teaching of this parable is abundantly clear. No one has to ask at the close of this parable, "Who does our Lord have in mind?" This parable also makes clear certain characteristics of true prayer. True prayer is fellowship with God. The Pharisee did not seek nor have this fellowship. Humility is necessary for true prayer. There are many prayers offered, not only by the Pharisees, but also by many today which do not even approach the standards for prayer which the Scriptures lay down for us. Humility is not common. Often what claims to be humble is not true humility. One wonders how many so-called "Publicans" today give thanks to God that they are not like the Pharisee! True humility is necessary beeause we as sinners come into the presence of a holy God. Humility becomes us because we can only live on free grace. We do well to look carefully at that which the Heidelberg Catechism has to say about the kind of prayer which pleases God and which He will hear (Question 117). We are to call on Him from the heart; only calling on the God of the Bible;

and we are to ask for those things which He has commanded us to ask of Him, or the things He has promised us. This will safeguard us against asking for those things for which there is no room in true prayer.

We must know our need, as this Publican does. We are to seek forgiveness and can be confident that we have been forgiven only when we forgive others, and not in the haughty spirit of the Pharisee. Compare the Pharisee—"I thank thee that I am not as others," with Paul—"I am the chief of sinners!"

Questions for Discussion

1. Is a "conservative" position, like that of the Pharisees, always proof that the individual lives and teaches the truth of God correctly? What is a true conservative position?
2. How badly had the teachings of the Pharisees infected the beliefs of the common people in the days of Jesus? Are there any indications of this in the New Testament?
3. Would it be well if our churches had their doors open all the time so that anyone would be able to come in at any time for private devotions? Or don't you think this is necessary? If not, why not?
4. Do you think such blatant self-satisfaction as that which the Pharisee reveals is very common today? Do you think his was a silent prayer?
5. Are all the elements of true prayer present in the prayer of the Publican? Which elements should be present in true prayer?

Christ Shall Have Dominion

Peter De Jong

"He shall have dominion. . .from sea to sea. . ." (Ps. 72:8).

A Canadian Epic

From Sea unto Sea is the title of perhaps the best in a four-volume, popular and exceedingly well-written series of Canadian histories. The account of the relatively recent spread of European civilization across North America is one of the most fascinating stories in history. It is a story full of action and adventure, human interest and geographical discovery, confusion and frustration, hardship and achievement. The westward expansion of the United States is more or less familiar to us who are south of the border. (It is frequently glamorized and caricatured in "Western" shows.)

Even less familiar to most of us than the United States story is the not less fascinating and remarkable parallel account of Canada's somewhat more recent spread "from sea to sea." That is in some respects a very improbable story. Consider the facts that the geographical and natural commercial connections of most of the inhabitants of Canada are north and south rather than east and west; most of the Canadians live nearer to the United States than to one another. Canadians who wanted to go from Montreal or Toronto to Vancouver, B.C. had to travel by way of Chicago and the United States. In defiance of these geographical and commercial considerations the nation's development was from east to west. In moving west that development had to surmount almost impossibly difficult geographical barriers. The uniting of the country as a dominion was eventually accomplished only by the building of a railroad. Construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway was an incredibly difficult feat of engineering and prohibitively expensive for a nation of perhaps one-tenth the population of the United States, scattered across an area larger than the 48 states. Although it seemed to be a very doubtful economic venture, it was a political necessity. The fantastic story of how it was planned and built was told by Canadian author Pierre Berton in a double volume, entitled *The National Dream* and *The Last Spike*. The author traced the way in which the government was persnaded to devote millions of dollars to what must have seemed for most of the people a very remote and impractical project. There was no way that it could be financed privately. The account outlines the dream and the often apparently insurmountable obstacles to its realization. In the exasperating manner of democratic politics, what one government can decide another can reverse a year or two later. There were endless frustrations that wore out and broke men. Then there were the unbelieveable difficulties of discovering a possible route, by no means a certainty when the survey parties groped for passage across the mountains of British Columbia. The route crossed passes where over fifty feet of snow might fall in a winter and climbed grades so steep that at one point the railway builders later resorted to spiral tunnels to reach the Kicking Horse Pass.

At one point the difficulties, costs and failing government support drove even the hardiest leaders of the enterprise to the point of abandoning it. Just when failure seemed inevitable, the railroad was saved by the Saskatchewan revolution of the French Canadian, Louis Riel. The government, finding itself suddenly compelled in the dead of winter to quickly raise an army and transport it to that remote prairie province to quell the revolt, had no means to accomplish that except

by the as yet far-from-completed railway. The government was assured that the troops could be moved and so they were hastily collected and transported, at times on open flat cars in bone-chilling winter weather through some of the coldest wilderness on the continent, north of Lake Superior. From points where the constructed line ended they had to cross the uncompleted gaps by sleighs or on foot, at one point across the glare ice of Lake Superior. The movement of troops which quelled the Riel revolt, demonstrated the need for and value of the railway and finally persuaded the reluctant government to bail it out when it seemed certain to collapse. Thus the railroad, promised when the Confederation took place in 1867, became a reality in 1885 and helped to knit the scattered colonies into a nation.

No "Civil Religion"

Although some of us may find this history fascinating, may we as Christians virtually identify the growth of the nation with the Kingdom of Christ—as Canada's adoption of the name "Dominion" from the prophecy of Christ's Kingdom in Psalm 72* might suggest? Is the " Dominion of Canada" Christ's Kingdom? Although Christian patriotism might move us in that direction, we ought to see clearly that such a move is out of order. We may not adopt the properly criticized "civil religion" that would do that. Neither Canada, nor the United States may be simply identified with the Kingdom of Christ. Despite their Christian traditions, there is far too much in both countries that is far from Christian.

The temptation to confuse patriotic sentiment and Christian convictions may sometimes be more subtle than we might expect. Dr. Harry Boer a while ago tried to defend the World Council of Churches' support of African Communist guerillas by arguing that they were only doing what our U.S. colonial fathers were doing with probably less justification, in the Revolutionary War against England (June 1982, RES *Theological Forum, Outlook,* March 1983, p. 18). The fallacy of such a cynical appeal to national prejudices ought to be obvious. Why should we assume that the Revolutionary War was justified? One who has read the Canadian version of that event, or even the novels of Kenneth Roberts, written from the perspective of Loyalists who were driven northward by the threats and violence of revolutionary agitators, might begin to question that. Recently the Seventh Day Adventist publication *Liberty* (July-August 1983 issue) traced the story of Rev. Jacob Duche, Jr. an Episcopal minister who opened the 1774 session of the Continental Congress with prayer and the reading of the 35th Psalm, of which John Adams said that it was "as if heaven had ordained that psalm be read this morning." He also opened the second session. As the independence movement grew he and others began to question how taking part in it would be harmonized with his vows, as a clergyman in the Church of England, to be faithful to the king. Caught in this crisis of conscience, he eventually had to leave for England, branded as a traitor, with his property confiscated. After the war-fever had died down, on returning to Philadelphia, he was received by President Washington in an apparent gesture of apology.

The United States can certainly not be simply equated with the Kingdom of Christ. Even if there were no question about the legitimacy of the American Revolution, that would in no way make it a plausible pretext on which to justify Christian churches using church funds to support anti-Christian guerillas who are shooting Christian missionaries.

In our December *Outlook*, Rev. Jelle Tuininga (p. 16) called attention to the way in which our churches' World Relief Committee, similarly confusing the Christians' and the churches' calling with national and governmental responsibilities, has blundered into political agitation to reverse the U.S. government's anti-Communist policies in Central America! He pointed out that this venture is the more ludicrous in urging Canadian churches to advise the U.S. government about Central America!

In our concern to avoid adopting a "civil religion" which identifies the United States or Canada with the Kingdom of Christ, we must also avoid the probably more common mistake of our age of assuming that there is little or no connection between the two. If we believe and confess the prophetic vision of Psalm 72 that Christ "shall have dominion from sea to sea," doesn't that imply that the Dominion of Canada as it spread from Atlantic to Pacific Oceans—and the earlier and parallel development of the United States between these two oceans are "His dominion," and that behind and through their sometimes fascinating and thrilling and sometimes blundering and exasperating histories He is in sovereign control of their destinies? Of course it does!

Christ Is King

It was the glory of Abraham Kuyper's career a century ago that he saw and tried to testify to this Biblical truth not only as a pastor but also as a working Christian citizen and politician. It was his confession that not a square inch of territory was exempt from this sovereign rule of Christ. His limited success in realizing that kind of dedication to Christ in the politics of the country, and the current abandonment of his aims by those who have succeeded him, do not make his purpose invalid; they only highlight the current apostasy of his successors.

Many of our Canadian immigrants, like our forefathers, uprooted from their old home country to find a place in a new and developing land, have sensed something of the calling and adventure as Christians of sharing in that enterprise under the direction and in the service of Christ the King. We who live south of the border need to be reminded that we have the same Christian calling and commitment.

The calling to serve the Lord Christ in all of the business of living may not be separated from the varied development and business of life around us, but neither may it be simply identified with and lost in the increasingly secular and anti-Christian developments of our countries. The Emperor Constantine in the 4th Century and King Charlemagne in the 8th Century may have been mistaken in some of their methods of trying to Christianize their realms, but they were right in their purpose to acknowledge Christ as King of Kings. They were in that respect more consistently Christian than today's "Christian" politicians who settle for a government that will only tolerate Christianity, but is forbidden to encourage it. Even pagan Nebuchadnezzar was driven to confess much more than a tolerant neutrality (Daniel 4:34-37). The fact of the matter is, as the Bible never ceases to remind us (Psalm 2:12 for example), and as we are prone to forget, that Christ is King and everyone will sooner or later be compelled to acknowledge that rule either in conversion or in condemnation. Our aim for ourselves and others must be conversion. "His dominion shall be from sea to sea . . . to the ends of the earth." ●

*J. Bartlet Brebner's, Canada A Modern History, p. 289.

The Lloyd-Jones Legacy

Donald Macleod's Tribute

Rev. Donald Macleod, gifted editor of the *Monthly Record* of the Free Church of Scotland pays high but discriminating tribute to Dr. D.M. Lloyd-Jones in the October 1983 issue of that publication. "It is curious that in a day of small things God gave the church a preacher such as Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones. It was not simply that in an age of pygmies he towered above the others. He would have towered in any age. Indeed he was arguably the greatest British preacher since the Reformation, rivalled only by Whitefield, Spurgeon and Chalmers." "He used no tricks. He was content to build up the message, unhurriedly adding truth to truth, happy to wait for the emotion and the rhetoric to come—if they would. There were few illustrations, even fewer personal anecdotes and no humor. He did not study brevity. Nor did he avoid technical biblical vocabulary. His one concern was to delcare: This is what the Bible says and this is what it means for you today. He excelled in the preacher's main task—transporting the word of God across the barriers of time, language and culture into the personal existence of modern men and women."

Call to the Ministry

Recalling the way in which Dr. Lloyd-Jones turned from a medical career which early promised to take him to the top of that profession, the editor devotes some attention to his call to the gospel ministry. He noted that his responding to that call involved turning away from professional ambition and a growing concern for his fellow men, patients and colleagues. It involved overcoming the efforts of friends and colleagues to dissuade him and overcoming self-doubt and a sense of his own unworthiness. But the writer observes that all these, mortifying personal ambition, caring for the lost, and feeling the constraint of the love of Christ (2 Cor. 5:14) do not yet coustitute a call to the ministry. "...For far too long Evangelicals have been hopelessly subjective in their view of what constitutes a call to preach." "Where does the church cnter into it?" It was the Doctor's personal decision to enter the ministry...not to train according to the normal course prescribed by his denomination and not to enter its regular ministry. Finally, it was his personal decision to begin his work at Sandfields. In all this individualism he was typical of generations of evangelicals, including ourself. But contrast it with the New Testament where everything is much less subjective. Paul and Barnabas appointed elders in Galatia (Acts 14:23). They themselves were appointed to their ministry work through the church at Antioch (Acts 13:2). Timothy appointed elders in the church at Ephesus (I Tim. 3:1ff). Titus did the same in Crete (Titus 1:5). "The inward call...creates *candidates*, not ministers. Only the external call of an authentic church creates a minister." He observes that before calling a church must "ascertain whether the individual has a divine call," but that "is not the same as a man saying he 'feels called.' It is something much more objective"—the possession of the God-given "gifts" for the work. "Not everyone who possesses such gifts will voluntarily offer himself as a candidate. John Knox never did so and John Calvin certainly did not volunteer for the work in Geneva. We should leave less to individual decision-making in such matters and place more stress on ministers and sessions identifying suitable men and urging them to train for the work of the gospel."

Ministerial Training

Dr. Lloyd-Jones decided against taking a regular seminary course, and many have argued from his example "against the need for ministers to be trained." The editor points out, however, that the doctor had had university and professional training as a doctor. "He knew the biblical languages and was widely read in church history and systematic theology." Furthermore, he "was a life-long student...he read incessautly...he was a man of books, papers and journals—perhaps even excessively so. The last thing that he was was an argument for an illiterate or philistine ministry."

As a self-taught preacher, the writer observes that, "not surprisingly, there were defects in his early preaching." "The most important was probably the absence of a Christ-centered emphasis." "It took him some time to realize that he was not giving enough prominence to Christ, and especially to the cross." The writer observes that he might have avoided such pit-falls "if he had entered the ministry with a proper grounding in the biblical doctrine of the person and work of Christ," and more study of "the principles of biblical interpretation."

Godly, But Imperfect Leadership

The writer remarks about what an enormous loss Dr. Lloyd-Jones' death was to British and Welsh evangelicalism. Perhaps this was accentuated by the development of what he calls "a Doctor-cult." "Our personal debt to the Doctor is immeasurable. But not even John Calvin was infallible and we must keep a sense of proportion. We can follow no man

implicitly; and we certainly cannot stand idly by while blind loyalty to one man's vision becomes a barrier to further evangelical progress." The writer believes that despite all of the Doctor's insight, "in some matters—notably his view of the sealing of the Spirit, his concept of Christian unity and his attitude to evangelical Anglicanism—the Doctor was quite simply wrong. "The writer notes a shift in the Doctor's emphasis from earlier stress on the "biblical, objective and doctrinal" to a late stress on "the subjective, experiential and even the mystical." Though never a Pentecostal—certainly not in liturgy, which in Westminster Chapel was "most inflexible"—"his views on the Christian experience of the Holy Spirit were latterly closely akin to those of Pentecostalism." "By the standards of historic orthodoxy, Pentecostalism is not simply an error. It is heresy. . . ." The writer observes that the tendency to regard the Doctor as "the Cardinal Archbishop of evangelism" tended to stifle the development of other leaders. Although he did not seek "prime time and special deference," this was "thrust upon him." The writer believes that "he should have borne testimony by his example to the parity of ministers" and sought to develop leadership in others. Finally, the writer cautions against too slavishly following the Doctor's method of preaching. ". . . Many a young man has begun his ministry with Eph. 1:1 and lost most of his congregation by the time he got to verse 14." "The doctor's method had enormous advantages and in his hands the result was often superb. But it is virtually impossible to apply to the Old Testament, it was often more topical than expository and. . . must be seen as only one method among many. Men like Augustine, Luther, Calvin, Edwards. . . used very different approaches; and who is to say that they were wrong?"

In conclusion, the article stresses the doctor's legacy as (1) emphasis on the primacy of preaching" by ministers as "heralds of God," (2) the dependence of that preaching on the power of the Holy Spirit, and (3) God's blessing on the Doctor's faithful use of outstanding gifts and humble diligence.

Aftermath at Westminster Chapel

In the May-June 1982 issue of *Reformation Today*, Kingsley Coomber writes on what has happened in Dr. Lloyd-Jones' old church, scene of over 40 years of his labors. He spoke of a (guest?) minister, "platform artist, master gimmick maker, manipulator of assemblies, archdeacon of the frivolous and trite, man-centered in the extreme—the opposite of everything exemplified in Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones" preaching in his old pulpit, and of the disappearance of the substantial materials that used to fill the bookroom. The writer quoted Spurgeon who in 1888 said, "Jesus said, 'Preach the Gospel to every creature.' But men are getting tired of the divine plan, they are going to be saved by the priest, going to be saved by the music, going to be saved by the theatricals, and nobody knows what! Well they may try these things as long as ever they like; but nothing can ever come of the whole thing but utter disappointment and confusion, God dishonored, the gospel travestied, hypocrites manufactured by thousands and the church dragged down to the level of the world."

The history of the New Testament Church, like that of God's Old Testament people, underscores the repeated warning found throughout God's Word against ever-threatening apostasy. A long evangelical history is no guarantee against a quick falling away. Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." "Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ." "But let each man take heed how he buildeth thereon" (I Cor. 3:10,11; 10:12). ●

P.D.J.

Learning from the Lobbyists

Randal Lankheet

It has never happened in the one hundred twenty-seven years of Christian Reformed Church history. Never before has our denomination been targeted by a single-issue pressure group. Never before has a group of such highly-organized and sorely-dissatisfied church members worked so hard to change one of the most time-honored practices within Reformed circles.

Of what do I speak? The Committee for Women in the Christian Reformed Church (CW-CRC). This self-appointed committee describes itself as "an independent group of persons concerned with the role of women in the church." It holds that "the ordination of women to ecclesiastical office is the Spirit-directed outcome of the teachings of Scripture." Its ultimate objective? "The equal participation of both women and men in the life of the church." For them "equal participation" means that women must be ordained to *all* ecclesiastical offices. Unless that happens the CW-CRC will not be satisfied.

Although I am convinced that many supporters of this committee have good intentions, I am not at all convinced that it deserves such support. Consider the following:

First, the title of the committee is completely inappropriate. A Committee *for* Women? Where does that designation leave the rest of us? *Against* women? May it never be! Its title purposely misleads one to think that all persons outside its membership rolls despise one of God's finest creations. The title is irritating. Do not thoughtful Christians react to the description, "Moral Majority," as if those who occasionally disagree with Jerry Falwell are neither moral nor in the majority? How much more should we react to the title, "Committee *for* Women in the Christian Reformed Church." Joan Flikkema, chairperson of the CW-CRC, is no more *for* women than I am. The Committee would probably dispute that claim, which only serves to illustrate the problem.

Second, as mentioned earlier, the very presence of such a group within the CRC is unprecedented in our denomination's history. Although the CW-CRC likes to think it is generally promoting the use of women's gifts in the church, it is actually spending the majority of its time and energy in defending the right of women to hold ecclesiastical office. Its ultimate objective is to clear the way for the ordination of women. In my opinion that makes the CW-CRC a single-issue lobby group. To be sure, groups like the Association for the Advancement of Christian Scholarship or the Reformed Fellowship were organized around certain perspectives, but neither of these groups were founded as a single-issue lobby group. The CW-CRC is different. Its ultimate goal is to change the understanding of and the rules for ordination.

Third, the political nature of the CW-CRC as a lobby group is evident as one examines its methods in working for change. Up to this point in our history, all ecclesiastical issues have been resolved more or less through the designated ecclesiastical channels: study committees of the consistory, classis, and synod; recommendations of advisory committees — sometimes resulting in majority and minority opinions; motions, discussions, votes; overtures, gravamina, and protests. Such agreed upon procedures have withstood the test of time in Reformed churches.

The CW-CRC is not content with these standard ecclesiastical channels. I fear it has learned its lessons from the National Rifle Association or from the United Auto Workers. These groups know all about politics and lobbying campaigns. What is their procedure in changing popular opinion? They simply form political action committees, raise the necessary funds by recruiting a generous membership, create grass roots support via direct mailings, and secure the endorsement of respected public figures. And so on. You have seen them at work.

Having read through past newsletters put out by the CW-CRC, I have discovered many similarities between their procedures and those of political lobby groups. The CW-CRC already is a non-profit, tax-deductible organization. At one time it talked about generating a mailing list of *every* female member in the CRC. It raises funds through membership dues and private contributions. It has planted satellite committees in such diverse places as Kalamazoo, Michigan; Denver, Colorado; and Riverside, California. It publishes the voting records of synodical delegates on issues involving women in ecclesiastical offices. It urges its constituency to engage in letter-writing campaigns to key denominational leaders. It enlists (and often receives) the endorsement of well-known pastors and seminary professors. It has targeted churches who consistently refuse to include CW-CRC announcements in their Sunday bulletins. The list could go on. The similarities between it and other political lobby groups are legion.

I find these tactics deplorable. I urge all those who care about ecclesiastical decency and good order to resist the political pressure applied by the CW-CRC.

Again, I must re-affirm my belief that many fine people support the CW-CRC. But even those with good intentions have no business importing lobbying techniques into the arena of ecclesiastical deliberation. ●

Note: Randal Lankheet is a student at Calvin Theological Seminary. He agreed to submit this article only at the request of the editor. An earlier version of his article appeared in The Kerux, *the newsletter of the student body at Calvin Seminary.*

Tells of an Old Fashioned Father

He was very much afraid of debt. It was not in his style of living. He wore a beard, I never knew him without one. It was the style those days. Such was evidently not the case in England if the story about Jacob Cats, the household poet of the Netherlands, is true. Cats had been delegated to represent the Netherlands at the government of England. They would not accept him because he did not have a beard. Cats made the rejoinder, had they known this in the Netherlands they would have sent them a billygoat.

Style has much to say in the life of a people. One's living standard may be such that it breaks him. Unless the standard of one's living be kept within the bounds of one's income we belong to the category of thieves and robbers. We are then taking something that does not belong to us.

Father did not believe in this. When he retired, his income was very small. He bought a little home which had both electricity and city water; he had both taken out. He figured out what both would cost them and he decided to continue the use of the pump which was on the porch and also the old lamp which had been used on the farm. The neighbors wondered what was the matter with the old gentleman next door. He must be suffering some mental derangement. The answer of father was: "My income is small and I must live within that income."

We may shake our heads at the reasoning of this old-fashioned father. His thinking may be carried to an extreme, but it contains a lesson sorely needed these days. In a day when we think that to be happy we need every gadget which modern science supplies to clutter the market, we are missing the mark.

And, sad to say, our government is leading the way. We have but to think of the staggering debt which is ever rising and placing us under a burden of interest which is becoming unbearable.

Back to the old-fashioned Biblical rule — Owe no man anything but to love one another.

(Rev.) John De Jong

Ripon, Cal.

From *The Banner*

News and Views

Elco H. Oostendorp

ARE VALUES LOSING VALUE? This is the title of an article by Lynn R. Buzzard, Director of the Christian Legal Society, in the December issue of *Eternity*. Mr. Buzzard alerts his readers to the extremes to which opposition to discrimination tends to go in these days. He points out that legislation and court action against racial discrimination is necessary and in many cases long overdue. However, this matter has been extended to areas which concern religious and moral values and standards in such a way as to threaten the very existence of Christian schools and other organizations. He gives several examples such as a Christian radio station that was forced to hire a non-Christian announcer; the San Francisco Orthodox Presbyterian Church that was forced into an expensive lawsuit by a homosexual organist; a Baptist Seminary that lost the right to hire non-staff personnel according to religious standards. The article calls attention to an area of concern for the right to be discriminating which is of the very essence of the freedoms we have come to cherish.

FANATICS IN JERUSALEM. *Eternity* (Dec. '83) has an interesting report on some observations about a trip to the Middle East by Dr. Russell T. Hitt. Among other things he reports that constant guard is kept over the so-called Temple area because of attempts to destroy the Muslim mosques now on that land. These attempts have been encouraged by fanatical ultra-Orthodox Jews who believe that the Messiah will return when the Temple is rebuilt. This idea is also supported by a group known as the International Christian Embassy (I.C.E.). At the annual feast of Sukkoth (Tabernacles) some 4,000 Christians from 30 countries staged a demonstration calling for the construction of the third Temple. A Jewish group called the Faithful of the Temple openly claims to have received support from Christians. In this article Dr. Hitt stresses that many Arabs are Evangelical Christians and that also among Jews the Gospel is being preached and churches established.

AN AMBASSADOR TO THE VATICAN? Congress recently repealed the 116 year-old ban on full diplomatic ties with the Vatican, headquarters of the Roman Catholic Church. For many years the President has had a personal representative in Rome, but without full diplomatic status. The popularity of Pope John Paul II and his influence in counteracting against Communism in Eastern Europe has been a factor in this decision. Congress passed it without hearings, and various Protestant groups opposed to this as a violation of the separation of church and state have been putting forth efforts to stop the implementation of the decision. The article on this in *Christianity Today* (12/16/83) concludes that the opposing groups "concede that the Pope's popularity and the presence of an all-but-official envoy already at the Vatican make it difficult to mobilize a ground swell of concern."

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF CHURCHES REFUSES HOMOSEXUAL DENOMINATION. By a vote 116-94 the governing board of the NCC decided to postpone action on the request of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Churches, a 27,000 member church with mostly homosexuals as members. Strong oppostion came from the nine Orthodox denominations and the National Baptist Convention USA. The large minority of 94 votes indicates that many in the NCC have no serious objection to homosexual church members (*CT*, 12/16/83).

THE SALVATION ARMY AFTER 118 YEARS is the subject of an article in *Christianity Today* (12/16/83). It traces the history of the Army from its founding in London by William Booth, a Methodist minister deeply concerned for the plight of the poor in the slums of England. Despised and mistreated at first, the movement came to be respected even within Booth's life-time. The Army is organized along military lines and there is strict discipline and a chain of command. Regular services are held, but the sacraments are not used. Much emphasis is placed on music. The following statistics are given: over 25,000 officers and cadets and 35,000 full-time employees operate in 86 countries, using 112 languages. Periodicals run to 123 editions and over 10 million copies annually. 260,000 attend Army-run schools; hospitals and clinics treat over 157,000 patients and over 2 million out-patients. Over 243,000 persons are accommodated daily and 8,000 missing persons are traced annually. Much work is done with alcoholics and unwed mothers. Vast amounts of food and other relief are given to meet disaster emergencies all over the world. Truly a wonderful ongoing realization of one man's vision of the calling of Christians to put their faith into practice.

DIVINE HEALING is the subject of two articles in *Christianity Today* (11/25 and 12/16/83). In the first, "A Surgeon's View of Divine Healing" by Dr. Paul Brand and Philip Yancey, the claims of present day "faith healers" are questioned and the occurrences of miraculous cures subjected to intensive examination. Dr. Brand does not question that God can perform miracles today as well as in Biblical times, but suggests that the claims of many that He is still doing so on a large scale do not hold water. Stress is placed on the serious problems that arise when people mistakenly refuse to use medical means. The story of the death of 15 month-

old Dustin Gilmore in 1978, one of some 50 deaths resulting from following a minister who forbids going to doctors, illustrates the danger of some claims made by extremists. Attention is called to the fact that many illnesses are healed by the body's resources and that there are many psychosomatic illnesses. Brand also points out that if Jesus died to save us from illness we should also not die. All in all, this is a well written defense of the traditional Reformed views on the relationship of faith to healing and the need to recognize that even when means are used God remains the great Healer.

The second article by Rodney Clapp is entitled "Faith Healing: A Look At What's Happening." The author also repudiates the claims and methods of many so-called divine healers, but does defend the present day emphasis on healing in the church. He outlines what he calls Centrist Healing. He also describes some new movements, notably the course offered at Fuller Seminary, "Signs, Wonders and Church Growth," and Oral Roberts' City of Faith, where the best of modern medical technology is combined with belief in divine healing. Included are a couple of examples of wonderful healings that defy explanation by the doctors. The case of Barbara Cummiskey who recovered completely from a serious case by multiple sclerosis (MS) is told in detail and is indeed a remarkable story. Clapp advocates a sane approach but wants to allow for the reality of divine healing, especially in the Christian community. The two articles give valuable insights into a very actual subject in the Church today.

The Gazing Angels

John Blankespoor

"The Cherubim are to face each other looking toward the cover." Exodus 25:20.

We who live in the New Testament can still learn much from the Old Testament. This is true even though the New Testament is the fulfillment of the Old. The apostle Paul compares the church of the O.T. with a minor, a child not yet of age. Someone once said that the Old Testament church was the church at kindergarten age. God taught His people then like a kindergarten teacher teaches little children. We often find in the Old Testament simple language and little simple history. God often used what we today call "visual and audio" education methods. The temple was the place where people could come to God and worship Him. God was visibly present with the Israelites in the cloud. In this meditation we take a look at one of the many "articles" in the temple, the cover (also called "mercy-seat") of the ark.

The temple had two main parts, the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies. They were divided by a thick curtain (which was torn from the top to the bottom when Jesus died on the cross). In the Holy of Holies, also called the most Holy Place, there was only one piece of "furniture," the ark. This ark was a box made of acacia wood and overlaid with gold. It was approximately forty inches long and a foot and one half wide and deep. In the ark Moses had to put a pot of manna which was given to the Israelites during the forty years in the wilderness, the budding rod of Aaron, and the two tables of the law, the ten commandments. The cover of the ark, or "mercy-seat," was also overlaid with pure gold. On that cover, at each end there was a statue of an angel, a Cherub. With wings stretched out the two stood facing each other. In that position they were both *looking down* at the cover.

To understand this symbolism of the gazing angels we must remember that in this most Holy Place God was present in the cloud. He spoke to Moses from between the Cherubim. In the ark was the law, the ten commandments. As holy and righteous, God demanded that His law be kept. Only when man keeps this law will He be blessed by this holy, righteous God.

Israel is sinful from the soles of their feet to the tops of their heads, says Isaiah. Not only was carnal Israel sinful, but all of God's people were disobedient. This disobedience to the law must result in bringing God's wrath upon them. Once a year, on the great day of atonement, the High-priest must enter the most Holy Place with the blood of a sacrificed animal and sprinkle the blood on the ark's cover, the mercy-seat. This would satisfy God's justice. The sprinkled blood was a type of the blood of Christ which would be shed in the fulness of time. It is at this sprinkled blood that the two angels gazed. How can blood satisfy the righteous God regarding all the sins of His believing people? What kind of blood is this?

We begin to understand this symbolism when we remember that these angels are Cherubim. There were, and still are, we believe, various kinds of angels. Some are Seraphim, others are Cherubim. The Cherubim were given the task of guarding the holiness of God against sin. Cherubim were set as guards at the gate of Paradise when Adam and Eve were expelled from it. In the temple these "holiness-guarding" angels are amazed as they see the power and blessing of the blood on the cover of the ark. The angels stare in astonishment at what is taking place as they observe the forgiving grace of God because of this blood!

We may conclude that these two statues of angels represent all of the angel world. How many angels there are we don't know. The Bible does speak of hosts of angels, of thousands of thousands (Rev. 5:11). This angel world is amazed at what takes place on that mercy-seat through the shed blood.

How that angel world burst into song on Christmas morning! Here they began to see the fulfillment of what they have gazed at and waited for throughout the centuries of the Old Testament (I Peter 1:12). Whether they understood it all at the time of Jesus' birth we don't know. But they surely did know that the birth of Jesus in some way was the unfolding of God's plan of redemption.

For us Christmas is past as well as Jesus' work on this earth, His dying on the cross, resurrection from the grave, followed by the Pentecost, giving of His Spirit. With this knowledge of God's complete work of salvation, we as saved sinners should surely respond with songs of wonder and gratitude. Angels, after all, are servants. As far as salvation from sin is concerned, they do not partake of it. They don't need that salvation. That is for sinful human beings, originally created in the image of God but fallen. If these angels as servants are so keenly interested in the work of the Lord, and marvel at the work of salvation through the gift of Jesus Christ, how much more we should do so. Can any saved sinner who really knows himself in all of his weaknesses remain silent regarding this great work of our gracious God? As we often sing, "Though we oft have sinned against Him, still His love and grace abide."

The scriptures speak of this marvelous grace again and again. Paul speaks of God's incomparable riches of His grace expressed in His kindness to us in Jesus Christ (Eph. 2:7). Paul also says concerning himself, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ was poured out on me abundantly" (I Tim. 1:14). Also "And I pray that you being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and how long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpassed knowledge" (Eph. 3:18).

In the book of Revelation the Apostle John tells us what he saw in a vision concerning heaven. All the angels with all the saved saints were surrounding the throne singing, "Worthy is the Lamb." Here the saved sinners, the church, join the angels in glorifying God in Christ Jesus, our Savior. We already sing of this now. One familiar hymn speaks of what we will do in adoration then, as the angels did in the temple:

> Father of Jesus, love Divine
> What rapture will it be,
> Prostrate before Thy throne to lie,
> And gaze and gaze on Thee!

Something of this the Lord showed to Israel in the Cherubim looking down in amazement at the mercy seat of the ark, and at the never ending value of Christ's blood which is our eternal hope. ●

Martin Luther and Music

Christine van Halen-Faber

During the month of November, we may celebrate Luther's 500th birthday. Such an anniversary presents a golden opportunity to take a closer look at its subject: Luther. Let us focus on the place of music in the life of this reformer.

Even in the early years of Luther's life, music played an important role. At the age of five, Martin was enrolled in the Magdenburg Cathedral School, and we may assume that he took part in the school choir. During the years at the *Trivial* and the Latin School in Mansfeld and Eisenach Luther became acquainted with the basic principles of medieval musical theory.

As a highschool student, he took part in active music making — he joined a group of boys who earned their pocket money by singing. Martin Luther was a *Kurrende Knabe,* a singing beggar. It was his singing which directed the attention of Ursula Cotta to the teenage boy. The well-to-do lady felt sorry for the singing beggar and "adopted" him. At her house Luther received the first taste of the comforts in life. He learned to play the flute and the lute, and music making became the important part of his daily routine.

During his university years at Erfurt Luther continued his studies in music theory. He even tried his hand at composition, transcribing vocal music for the lute.

The reformer considered music a glorious gift of God, very much like theology and would not part with his "little gift of music for anything else in the world." From this, we may note that Luther rated music highly. In his own words, "Frau Musica is the sister of Theologia." Music may be used to underline the truth of the gospel. Deep in the rich choral tradition of the Romanist Church, Luther was convinced of the liturgical function of music. He stressed that church music was first of all a need by which the believer worships and sings praises to his Creator.

The origin and goal of music are the same: God and Creator. Luther played church music in the newly-found realm of Christian freedom. Within this realm of Christian

freedom, congregation, organists, and church choirs, were encouraged to develop their respective talents to the highest degree.

The second aspect of Luther's view of church music relates its role in spreading the gospel. In his foreword to George Rhau's *Symphoniae Iucundae* (1538), Luther said, "... thus it was not without reason that the fathers and prophets want nothing else to be associated as closely with the Word of God as music. Therefore, we have so many hymns and songs where message and music join to move the listening soul ... After all, the gift of language, combined with the gift of song, was only given to man to let him know that we should praise God with both words and music, namely, by proclaiming (the Word of God) in music by providing sweet melody with words." God's Word could be spoken or sung but the message of the gospel remains the same. Luther's own hymns contain elements of guilt, grace, and gratitude. They are forthright in character, and do not proclaim a cheap, superficial gospel.

Finally, Luther saw church music as an offering by the congregation. His understanding of the royal priesthood of all believers encouraged him to involve the whole congregation in making melody to the Lord. Songs in the language of the people were added to the existing Latin liturgy.

We may wonder why Luther insisted that Latin be kept in the worship service, while it was his desire to give young people a chance to participate. But let's not forget that every six-year old learned Latin in school!

Luther arranged some songs in four part harmony. Again the reason was no other than that he "wanted to attract the youth (who should and must be trained in music or other fine arts) away from the love songs and carnal pieces of those days, and to give them something wholesome to learn instead .... I want to see all the arts, especially music, used in the service of Him who has given and created them."

The role of the organist was never minimized, and even the church choir retained its place to some extent. Luther suggested that all musicians receive adequate incomes to be paid by the church.

Music education was mandatory in the schools organized by Luther. "Those who have mastered the art of music are made of good stuff, and are fit for any task. It is necessary indeed that music be taught in the school. A teacher who cannot sing is not even worth looking at." Luther takes it one step further, when he insists that music study should be a necessary prerequisite to ordination: "we should not ordain young men into the ministry unless they have become well acquainted with music in the school."

Today, five hundred years after Luther's birth, we may continue in the pathway of this reformer. Our worship service may be filled with the glad sounds of praise. Let us blend song and music to recite God's fame. Let us express our thankfulness and praise God's deeds of might. Let us sing of our delight and confess our faithfulness. (See *Book of Praise* Psalm 92:2). ●

For further reading see:

S. Blume, *Protestant Church Music* (London 1974).
J.P. Bakker, *Lutherin de Spiegel van zijn Liederen* (Kampen, 1983).
R.N. Stevenson, *Patterns of Protestant Church Music* (Cambridge, 1963).
G.L. Etherington, *Protestant Church Music, It's History and Practice* (New York, 1962).

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VIEW POINT

The Role of a Church Paper?

Some time ago a reader wrote in *The Banner* "Voices" column: "I often feel that *The Banner* is used to indoctrinate us in the changes that are about to occur in the Chr. Ref. Church." Later another reader expressed himself as follows: "How refreshing it would be to read even one issue of *The Banner* in which our Reformed creeds, historic forms, and moral heritage were supported instead of attacked aud derided."

I can understand something of the frustration of these readers. I too am often unhappy with the "direction" (or lack thereof) of *The Banner*, particularly during the last year or two. Several of the contribntions to "Soapbox" have been downright disgusting. One wonders why they are even printed in *The Banner*. A measure of diversity and discussion on issues is good, provided it takes place within the framework of our common confession. But that has not always been the case. I believe there has been a very definite bias towards the "women's liberation" movement in the church in the pages of *The Banner* (think of the articles by Evenhouse, Hart & Vos in particular). I don't know who is fully responsible for what comes in *The Banner*, but I have an idea that the Editor and Assistant Editor have something to do with it. And there is no doubt that such articles are placed intentionally. And too often we are simply presented with "the goods" without any editorial (or otherwise) comment of approval of disapproval. Readers are left "hanging in the air." And that might not be all that bad if *The Banner* were an "ordinary" paper. But each issue states that it is "the official publication of the Christian Reformed Church." Now I have never been able to figure out exactly what that means, but I know that in the minds of many people it means that what *The Banner* says, the church says. That isn't true, happily, but that's the way it often comes across. And that is *not good*. In my opinion *The Banner* isn't providing the type of Reformed leadership that the church needs and that we can expect.

The Geref. Kerken in the Netherlands have never had an "official" church paper, and I wonder whether we should have one. If we do, we better make clear that the only thing that's "official" about it is that the entire church pays for it, and "owns" it. For the rest, there is nothing "ex cathedra" about any of its articles or editorials. And the readers better not have any illusions about that matter.

One more thing: Of late the Rev. Boomsma has called for some renewed theological discussion in the church. And even though *The Banner* is not first of all a theological journal, yet it could be used to educate and stimulate our people in

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the fundamentals of the Reformed faith and its implications for today. But that doesn't happen much.... Issues suddenly come upon us, and we are ill prepared to handle them, simply because we acted as if all was well and there was no cloud on the sky. We were often unaware of the theological climate around us, and were defenseless when foreign ideas came within the gates. Think e.g. of the "Infallibility debate," the "love of God" debate and more recently the "Genesis" controversy....

Prof. M.H. Woudstra of Calvin Seminary has often pleaded for more open discussion on these issues in the pages of our church periodicals, so we might be prepared to properly deal with issues when they arise. To be forewarned is to be forearmed... Too many of our people are theologically illiterate, and something has to be done to change that. ●

J. Tuininga

DANCING
the Christmas Story at Calvin

The Grand Rapids Press for Saturday, December 17, 1983 devoted most of a page and three photographs to describing how a group of men and women students, members of Calvin College's liturgical dance troupe had "enacted a Christmas story for the audience at the Calvin College Fine Arts auditorium." Karen Sterk "choreographed the 20-minute performance" given at the college "chapel." "Loosely, the concerto depicts the unity of God in the trinity, the angels's announcement to Mary she will be the mother of Jesus, Joseph and Mary's grueling trek to Bethlehem and the coming of the wise men and shepherds to praise the newborn Messiah," according to the news report. "'I hope people have a lot of fun watching this. That's one of the main ideas,' Sterk said."

The Apostle Paul labored for the gospel in a Greek world whose dramas and theaters are still admired and used up to the present day. He did not try to adapt and use these popular entertainment devices to present the gospel or modify Christian methods of worship. Instead he wrote to the sophisticated church at Corinth that "God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe" (1 Cor. 1:21).

When the bored Israelites in the desert remembered and began to long for the entertainments of Egypt, Aaron evidently thought that the pagan ideas and practices could be adapted to and serve a religious purpose by announcing, "Tomorrow shall be a feast to the LORD" (Exodus 32:5)....and the people sat down to eat and to drink and rose up to play." But God was not pleased with that kind of pagan fun although it might be called "worship." He had given a commandment about how He wanted to be worshipped, and neither the "church in the wilderness," nor that of our own time is free to ignore that.

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The feminist heresy continues to be industriously promoted in these circles. In a recent announcement to the Woodlawn congregation (which meets in Calvin College's FAC auditorium) the people were informed that the elders had decided to have women "elder assistants" serving at the celebration of the Lord's Supper. The introduction of this practice was defended as "not in conflict with the Church Order" and as a "positive response" to 1975 Synod advice to churches "to make all possible use, within biblical guidelines and the restrictions of the Church Order, of the talents and abilities of women in the work of the church."

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One of our readers also sent us a copy of a notice appearing in *GRACE Notes* (publication of the local ecumenical organization) of December 1983.

"Pulpit Supply"

Congregations which need an occasional supply for their pulpit and which welcome a woman Master of Divinity student from Calvin Seminary please call Joan Bulthuis at...

P.D.J. ●

Who Am I?

Glenn P. Palmer

I am a little unusual because I am the forerunner of the health food craze. You see, I lived in the Biblical times. Open your Bibles and find out who I am. I am a lover of honey, but not the honey from apiaries. I prefer wild honey. Although I am not a vegetarian, my meat would not be served at the Black Angus. I prefer short-horned grasshoppers or cicadas; they are rather crunchy, but taste delectable. Have you ever tried them? Although I am not a Pentecostal, the first time I met the Christ I lept for joy. As a matter of fact, I am from a rather staid family. My great grandfather a number of generations ago was Aaron, the brother of Moses. My fire and brimstone preaching attracted great crowds, but eventually I lost my head over the matter and that was that.

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Do you remember the chariot race in the epic *Ben Hur*? Although I lived earlier than that time, I was also very good with the chariot. How did I become such an expert? In the army of course. The lookout at Jezreel cried out, "The driving is like that of ... the son of Nimshi." (That is my grandfather's name. My father's was Jehoshaphat, but he is not as famous as my grandfather, and so I am often called "the son of Nimshi.") "He drives like a madman" (NIV). ●

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