THE OUTLOOK

DEVOTED TO THE EXPOSITION AND DEFENSE OF THE REFORMED FAITH

JUNE 1984

GOD'S ORDER
CHOOSING A PROFESSOR
CHRISTIAN REFORMED SYNOD AGENDA

God's Order Is Glorious

Cecil W. Tuininga

The church in Corinth had problems. New converts, called to live within the bounds of their new freedom in Christ, needed constant guidance and instruction. Recognizing that the apostle Paul preached God's divinely inspired word to them; they readily listened to and followed his instructions. The apostle praised them for this (I Cor. 11:2) and it gave him the more encouragement to write about how the Corinthians must live in the world and in the church.

I Corinthians 7:17-24 explains how God's people are to live within the social and economic areas of life. Salvation does not free one from the social structures of life but calls him to so live and work as to be a redeeming influence within them. Because in Christ there is neither "slave nor free" (Gal. 3:28) does not mean that in the economic sphere there are no slaves. There is an order in the social and economic world that believers have to recognize as established by God. Man may bring in injustices which distort God's order, but that may never be an excuse for revolution to destroy that order. Rather, God calls us to restoration of His order through the Gospel. God's people must so live within the structures of this world that they "make the teaching about God our Saviour attractive" (Titus 2:9). In this connection it is good to read such texts as Ephesians 6:5; Colossians 3:22,23; and especially I Peter 2:18.

In the same way believers must live within the communion of the saints. Also in congregational life God has set an order. God's people must not only recognize that order, but also exhibit that in the way they conduct themselves, even in their dress. That order the apostle spells out very clearly in I Cor. 11:3. There we read that "...the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God." That this headship involves authority, rule, and subordination is evident from the context. The wearing of a veil was a token of one being under authority. Some women thought that the new liberty in Christ freed them from that authority. It seems that the wearing of a veil was in dispute. In a society in which presumably only shrine prostitutes removed a veil, we can understand that taking off a veil in public by new converts created a stir and false impressions.

Scripture addresses itself to that particular question in unmistakable terms. It makes it crystal clear that God demands that believing men and women recognize the order God has established. That order was to be observed and become manifest wherever and whenever there is a gathering of men and women. Especially is this so within the communion of the saints. There it must be seen that both men and women honor God's order. That must be seen in the way men dress and cut their hair and it must be seen in the way women dress and wear their hair. Women must show, when there is praying or prophesying, that they are under authority, that is, under man as the head. They must do that for the sake of the angels also.

That statement about the angels is interesting as well as baffling. Commentators wonder why and how the angels are involved in this. Everyone knows that angels are present wherever God's people are involved. They are spirits ministering to God's elect children at all times. As such ministers to "those who will inherit salvation" (Hebrews 1:14) they are naturally very much concerned that these "heirs" observe proper decorum. Angels are grieved when God's order is set aside. I suggest this is the more so since many angels rebelled against God's order among the angels when Satan led them astray. Angels would be very sensitive on this score.

The apostle is not addressing the husband-wife relationship in this passage. He deals with that in Ephesians 5:22-23. What he refers to here is how the headship principle must also be practiced by the family of God. That must be practiced not only when the congregation is gathered in corporate worship (I Cor. 14:33-36) but also when there are other meetings being held by some of the congregation, for prayer or Bible study, or the like. In the worship services women are not permitted to speak; in meetings other than that they must reflect that they are observing God's order, recognizing man as head.

That man is the head of woman must, I take it, be seen in the particular calling of men to be leaders, protectors and guides to the women. Men are called to be leaders heading the army of the Lord. That is not only true when they are assigned special offices in the church, but that belongs to them by virtue of a calling to observe God's order. That this is in some sense similar to Christ's headship over man can be deduced from what the apostle writes to the Ephesians as quoted above and fully implied in the name Christ as used in I Cor. 11:3. As Christ submitted to the Father for the salva-

tion of His people, so men must submit to Christ for the salvation of the women. Within the communion of the saints this order of headship must be worked out. Then men will know what duties that entails. To give the kind of leadership and rule entrusted to them they must know God's Word and live it joyfully. Only when men are revealing the image of God can they fulfill their calling as heads of the women. And when they do so they will gain the respect and reverence as the heads from women which God demands from women.

This is no easy order to follow. Its demands on both men and women are awesome. Both need the grace of God and its enabling power to remain in the divine order. Their need is greater when women are much more highly talented than men. Even such conditions do not allow men to abdicate their calling as leaders, rulers and guardians. And they do not allow women to become revolutionaries against the divinely established order. In such cases this message from God's Word must be the more carefully maintained. A highly gifted woman has no right to usurp authority over less gifted men but must submit to proper rule and leadership within the confines of God's will. Without the observance of the requirements for godly living laid down in God's Word, the whole headship principle collapses. When men and women both remain within the order God has set for them here is an attendant glory. To that the apostle refers when he speaks of man being the glory of God and the woman the glory of man. And it must be repeated, that holds for every marriage as it does for the household of God.

To try to go into all the dimensions of this truth would make this article much too long. Allow me to say that this simple, clear teaching of Scripture is being questioned and criticized today. In a booklet "What is Headship?" edited by Joan D. Flikkema, who is the executive secretary of The Committee for Women in the Christian Reformed Church, we find statements such as "Paul wrongly implies that women are not God's image, though men are, " or, "Paul wrongly requires absolute silence from women," or, "Paul failed to work out fully his doctrine's social implications." The names of the authors who made such statements are given. Such startling statements, seemingly quoted with approval, make the Word of God of none effect. The warnings of the apostle apply to them. "If anybody thinks he is a prophet or spiritually gifted, let him acknowledge that what I am writing to you is the Lord's command. If he ignored this, he himself will be ignored" (I Cor. 14:37,38). It is noteworthy that the apostle said this after forbidding women to speak in the churches. Such a statement is the more important in today's world when those who claim to be Christians and also Reformed, dare to suggest, as is frequently being done today, that Paul's writings were for then, conditioned entirely by the culture of his time. Such claims destroy God's Word completely.

Apostacy runs with swift feet! It is running its swift course among us today. It seems hard to believe that many of our leaders are being captivated by the new hermeneutic and working feverishly to have the clearly-contrary-to-Scripture practice of women in ecclesiastical office implemented as soon as possible. And that is but a beginning of what will surely follow. If ever there was a time for a call to arms against this wave of heretical teachings and actions, it certainly is today. May those who claim to be men of God stand up and be counted.

Rev. Cecil Tuininga is a retired minister at Edmonton, Alberta.

THE OUTLOOK

(USPS 633-980)

"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).

JOURNAL OF REFORMED FELLOWSHIP, INC.

Send all copy to Managing Editor, Rev. Peter De Jong, 4985 Sequoia Dr., S.E., Grand Rapids, MI 49508. Phone (616) 698-6267.

EDITORIAL COMMITTEE: Arthur Besteman, John Blankespoor, John Engbers, Harlan Vanden Einde, Henry Vanden Heuvel, Syburn Voortman, Clarence Werkema.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES: Henry Vanden Heuvel, President; Jay A. Wesseling, Vice-President; Arthur Besteman, Secretary; Ronald Van Putten, Treasurer; Peter Wobbema, Jr., Assistant-Secretary-Treasurer; John Blankespoor, John Engbers, Paul M. Ingeneri, John H. Piersma, Berton Sevensma, Harlan Vanden Einde, John Vander Aa, Syburn Voortman, Clarence Werkema.

Production Manager: Peter Wobbema.

Business Manager: Mrs. Mary Kaiser.

This periodical is owned and published by Reformed Fellowship, Inc., a religious and strictly non-profit organization composed of a group of Christian believers who hold to the Reformed Faith. Its purpose is to give sharpened expression to this Faith, to stimulate the doctrinal sensitivities of those who profess this Faith, to promote the spiritual welfare and purity of the Christian Reformed Church particularly and also of other Reformed churches, and as far as possible to further the interests of all Christian action and institutions of Reformed character.

The publishers of this journal express their adherence to the Calvinistic creeds as formulated in the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, the Canons of Dort, and the Westminster Confession and Catechisms.

All contributions represent the personal views of the writers and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the members of Reformed Fellowship, Inc.

Subscription Policy: Subscription price, $7.50 per year, $13.50 2 years (Canada rates $11.50 per year, $23.00 2 years). Unless a definite request for discontinuance is received, it is assumed that the subscriber wishes the subscription to continue without the formality of a renewal order and he will be billed for renewal. If you have a change of address, please notify the Business Office as early as possible in order to avoid the inconvenience of delayed delivery. Include your Zip Code.

EDITORIAL AND CIRCULATION OFFICES

THE OUTLOOK
4855 Starr Street, S.E., Grand Rapids, Michigan 49506, Telephone 949-5421
Office Hours: Monday, Wednesday, Friday 9-11 a.m.
After Office Hours please call: 452-9519
Mailing Address: 4855 Starr Street, S.E., Grand Rapids, Michigan 49506

Contents

June 1984 Volume XXXIV No. 6

CHRISTIAN REFORMED SYNOD Agenda

Peter De Jong

Back-to-God Hour

This year's 450-page synod agenda begins, as usual, with the stirring report on the denomination's radio and television outreach, its Back-to-God Hour. "We have a longer tradition of broadcasting than any other denomination has," and it is characterized as a distinctively church activity. It reaches out "to every inhabited region in major world languages, stressing at all times the word of the cross and calling men everywhere to faith in and obedience to Jesus Christ, urging them to join themselves to His church; all such programs shall convey the message of the infallible Scriptures, in harmony with the Reformed confessions. . . ."

Our thirty-year-old TV effort is comparatively low-cost, approximately equaling what we spend on radio.

Our quarter-century old Arabic broadcast draws an increasing response in the Muslim world. Rev. Victor Atallah, an Orthodox Presbyterian missionary, now works with Rev. Bassam Madany in follow-up. The work in Spanish, led by Rev. Juan Boonstra continues to draw a large response. The report states that, "Because of the highly sensitive nature of the political and social situation in this region, it is our conviction that, in the interest of mission strategy, our church should not express itself publicly on political matters in Latin America." "It is our conviction that our work on behalf of justice and righteousness and our primary task of bringing the gospel of Christ will be best served if we do not unnecessarily produce statements that hinder the work of the agencies in areas in which the political/social situation is confusing and volatile." Our broadcasts to China have "the potential of reaching 90 percent of the country's population." A Russian broadcast is still an experimental program. There are also extensive Portugese, French, Japanese and Indonesian language programs.

Home Missions

The 19-page home missions report, among its rather routine details, states that approximately half of the field budget will be invested in ministries among non-Anglo people or minorities. If this happens to be the character of the people among whom we have opportunity to bring the gosepl, it may be worth noticing. If it represents a deliberate priority on the basis of race, it is the racism which we must oppose. We notice that after many years as a mission school Rehoboth Christian School is becoming parent-controlled.

Publications

The Board of Publications focuses attention on its long-range plans observing that "They may not be kept secret, like battle plans in which the church is our enemy (or, more typically, like advertising campaigns in which the church is our "market.") We owe the church both the dignity and the credibility which can only be achieved when we ask her, Would you like us to take you *there*? and when we listen to her answer." It observes that Christian Reformed Church users now represent less than a third of its total accounts. It wants to change its name for something less parochial to facilitate its sales outside of the denomination. It proposes to take over the job of the liturgical committee (p. 71). (Who decided that the church must be condemned to perpetual liturgical experimentation?) It wants to take over the job of the World Literature Committee. It proposes to get into film, radio and/or TV. It wishes to publish a new monthly periodical for church leaders and would like also to begin publishing a monthly Calvinistic news magazine. It wants to update its equipment, provide complete customer services, and relocate its operations in larger facilities to be provided by the denomination at between 1.5 and 2 million dollars (SIC report. p. 242).

The Synodical Interim Committee (pp. 238-244) endorses Publications' desire for larger building facilities on the ground that this would provide more room for other growing denominational agencies in the present building when it is vacated by Publications. "While the Board of Publications is an agency of the Christian Reformed Church, it has become, especially during the past decade, consciously and increasingly less 'agency-like' and more 'business-like'" (p. 241). It "is also by far the largest organization housed within the denominational building."

It appears that the Board of Publications is seeking to build an empire (something comparable to the Vatican or Zondervan's) that extends considerably beyond what the church authorized its servant to do. Many who in recent years have found the Board's educational materials unsuitable because of the abandonment of the systematic training in Biblical doctrine which once characterized our catechism classes, and have had to look elsewhere to obtain such materials (our Reformed Fellowship markets some of them) will likely see little valid reason for such commercial expansion. If the denomination does not take a critical look at this expanding church venture into business, the IRS might want to do that.

A special problem which the Board is bringing to the synod is the case of an employee, Paul Stoub, who refuses to pay half of his income taxes on the grounds that they go for

military expenses, which violate his conscience. While the church must respect the conscience of its members (even when they are misguided), when the federal government laid claim to wages owing to him, the Board felt that that claim should be paid. Since Stoub protested against this decision, the Board is refering the matter to the synod. They can hardly expect the church to sustain refusal to pay taxes (Romans 13:6,7). That is encouraging anarchy.

The Board defensively supports the new *Banner* editorial policies (which permit it to promote views in conflict with the churches' creeds or conscience. See May *Outlook*, p. 2). pointing to the fact that subscriptions are increasing. It also reports, "Film reviews returned to these pages without (so far) a whisper of complaint" (p. 62f.). After the death of Rev. W. Haverkamp, it has employed as editor-in-chief of the *Wachter*, Dr. Siert Woudstra, until the publication's scheduled demise late in 1985.

Calvin College and Seminary

The Calvin Board's 7-page report asks the synod to approve its list of faculty and staff appointments. (See the article in this *Outlook* which points out that even seminary appointments are no longer decided by the synod.) An overture (Number 29, p. 442) from Southern California proposes transferring Calvin College from the control of the denomination to that of a society hy 1987. Another from the First Church of Chino, California, (Number 31, pp. 445-450) seeks to maintain the right of a consistory to inquire concerning the confessional views of seminary professors when they become questionable. Despite the fact that all who hold office in our churches have declared in the Form of Subscription that they would "be always willing and ready" to provide further explanation of their "sentiments respecting any particular article of the confessions of faith," the Calvin Board has denied that a consistory has the right to ask such questions. The Church, therefore, asks the synod to affirm this right guaranteed by the Form of Subscription.

World Missions and World Relief

A major problem which is likely to demand much attention at the synod is that of relating our world mission to our world relief activities. These two programs representing the same churches and working in many of the same places are under separate and quite different organizations. The resulting confusion and friction moved last year's synod to appoint a special commission with extraordinary powers to correct this intolerable situation. That commission now reports (pp. 377-407). It proposes to retain the separate world mission and world relief organizations coordinating them under one board and executive committee (pp. 393, 395) with two directors. Although the report acknowledges that "the heralding of the gospel is central to the church's mission" (p. 383) and cautions against entering into commitments to other churches or agencies without our churches' approval (p. 382), and getting into developmental programs which are broadly humanitarian instead of Christian (p. 385ff), and against letting the secondary material help become primary and the means become ends (p. 388), it proposes in its organizational restructuring to place missions and relief side by side as equals in a new combined organization to be called *Christian Reformed Board of World Ministries*. It proposes that half of the delegates to this board be "diaconal," nominated by diaconal conferences. It is clear that the practical politics of the situation are prompting what amounts to a major restructuring of our Reformed or "presbyterian" church government with its rule by elders. To overcome administrative problems, the proposal chooses frankly for the authoritarian management structure of the world relief committee rather than that of the mission board which tried to maintain the Reformed principle of parity of office (p. 403). It defends this admittedly "secular organizational and human relations theory" supported system on the basis of efficiency. The gospel testimony of many other missions has been displaced by material, political and social programs. Our mission administration has already shown a strong inclination to move in that direction. If that movement is now to be accelerated by being merged with material and action-oriented relief programs, the future of our continuing denominational gospel missions becomes even gloomier.

Interchurch Relations

In the report on interchurch relations one notices that the committee has appointed Professor John H. Stek and Dr. Fred H. Klooster to meet with the commission of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands regarding their Liberal document on biblical authority entitled *God Met Ons* (p. 169). The report gives much attention to relations with South African churches. It appointed a committee consisting of Dr. John H. Kromminga, Dr. John H. Stek, Dr. Nicholas Wolterstorff, and Dr. Henry Zwaanstra "to study the question of whether apartheit is a heresy." The Interchurch Relations Committee concludes that it is a lieresy and that "any church that does not vigorously oppose such an ideology must be judged guilty of disobedience to God's Word and to Christ its Lord" (p. 179). Although we cannot defend South Africa's reportedly discriminatory laws, one wonders who constituted us the judges of those churches. The business becomes even more dubious when we observe the report of the committee's consultation with our churches' race committee, SCORR (which specialized in making increasing discriminatory grants on the basis of race, ostensibly to remove race discrimination) which is also sending a delegation to South Africa (pp. 220, 179). Could not our churches, with the same logic, be charged with heresy because we are not vigorously protesting against immigration laws which keep many foreigners from freely entering into the U.S.? Is the fact that religious Liberals everywhere have made South Africa their favorite "whipping-boy" an adequate reason why our churches "must get in the act"?

Liturgy

The Liturgical Committee presents its revised collection of prayers (which probably few will use). More significant is the fact that it proposes to remove the old forms for baptism and the Lord's Supper from the new edition of the *Psalter Hymnal*. While the old forms had weaknesses, many in the churches find some of the newer forms more tasteless or offensive. It seems that the committee is now reaching the point where it will compel the churches to swallow its concoctions.

Synodical Interim Committee

In 1978 Classis Sioux Center overtured the Synod to have salary and fringe benefit schedules reported in the agenda on the ground that "the constituency paying the quotas is entitled to this information." After this was adopted by the synod, following synods received a new kind of "financial and business supplement" to the agenda which, unlike the

rest of the agenda which is sent to all who hold office in the church, is only given to the synodical delegates and made available to consistories who make special request for it. Thus, information regarding this financial matter was still kept secret from the constituency whom the synod acknowledged "is entitled to" it. Last year Classis Sioux Center again overtured the synod to request quota-supported agencies to comply with the earlier decision to report salaries including fringe benefits. The synod also adopted this overture, but the report of it is included in the 1983 *Acts* (p. 701) between decisions to engage a paid consultant to determine what salaries should be. Now the Synodical Interim Committee reports (p. 230) that the review of these salary recommendations is "in progress." Why does it have to take over a year for even our synods to get an answer from our executives to the simple question, "What are we paying you?"

The Committee, in its second appendix (pp. 245-248) proposes that the rules adopted by the synod in 1978 regarding accrediting various agencies for denominational support be more consistently and firmly enforced!

Committee on Headship in the Bible

Since this 94-page report is reviewed elsewhere in this issue, we need give little attention to it here. The 54-page majority report is strong and clear in its analysis of Bible teaching, but inconsistent and weak in its conclusions. Although it clearly points out that the Bible forbids placing women in ruling offices in the church, it recommends permitting them to become deacons, although these, in our churches do share with elders the government of the church! The First (5-page) minority report asks that we consistently apply this clear teaching of the Bible and limit the churches' governing offices, (including that of deacon) to men. The (35-page) second minority report is an exceptionally good example of how one can try to misinterpret a large body of Bible teaching to say the opposite from what it says. The report is, for example, determined that the first chapters of Genesis shall say nothing about man having any priority or differing role from those of woman, despite Paul's argument to the contrary (I Tim. 2:11-15) and it is equally determined that Paul's clear differentiation of roles in I Tim. 2; I Cor. 14:33-38 and Eph. 5:22-33 shall be explained away and dismissed as political compromises which flatly contradicted Paul's own teaching and practice. This material is a good contemporary example of the kind of twisting of the Scriptures by the scribes of our Lord's days which elicited some of His harshest condemnations (Matt. 23).

In connection with this report, Overture Number 12 from Southern California's classis asks the Synod to reaffirm its 1975 decision that women be excluded from ecclesiastical office unless compelling Biblical grounds are advanced for a change (pp. 431, 432), Overture Number 13 from Toronto would leave the matter of ordaining women as deacons open to the choice of individual consistories. Overture Number 14 from the church at Pinellas Park, Florida, asks that the practice of restricting ordination to church offices to men be maintained, arguing this on the gronnds of the Bible, of observations of our old mother churches in the Netherlands and of our relations with other orthodox Reformed church bodies. Overture 15 from the Maranatha Church of Edmonton would admit women to be deacons as clearly distinguished from elders, while Overture 16 from the Third Church of the same city would throw all offices open to women.

Other Matters

Report 36 from a synod committee proposes that we remove some ambiguities in the practice of receiving ministers from other denominations by making the rules so stringent that no such minister may be received until the synod is convinced that failure to admit him would "be a unique loss for the denomination" (p. 414)! Such an outrageous restriction suggests a union trying to enforce a closed shop. In contrast with this, Overture Number 2 from Northern Illinois wants to modify access to the pastorate with a multitude of unspecified racial (or racist?) adjustments. When did the Lord ever authorize us to make racial qualifications to the service of His gospel?

Overture Number 1 from Rocky Mountain Classis wants to admit children to participation in the Lord's Supper by simply setting aside the requirements of self-examination (I Cor. 11:17-34) which the Bible prescribes. It is evident that the argument for admission of children is really an outgrowth of the kind of "presumptive regeneration" notions which have helped to demoralize our mother churches in the Netherlands.

Overtures 3, 4, and 5 ask for a study committee to deal with the problem of alcohol abuse.

Overture 10 from the church at Vergennes, Vermont, would have churches which refuse to abide by our Church Order be denied support from our fund for needy churches, because it is unfair to expect churches which live by the Church Order to support those who will not, and it is as reasonable to expect aided churches to respect the Church Order as it is to expect them to meet certain financial requirements.

Overture 11 would revise the quota system, basing it on individual members rather than families. Overtures 17 and 19 would have those licensed to exhort also sign the Form of Subscription. Overture 22 wants the dance decisions revised to warn against increasing abuses in this respect. Overture 25 would enforce lay and clergy balance in membership on denominational boards. Overture 26 would remove what it considers offensive wording in the Belgic Confession about the Anabaptists and Overture 27 wants to remove from the Heidelberg Catechism Question and Answer 80's warning against the heresy of the Roman Catholic mass. Overture 30 asks that we face frankly our differences with the Reformed Church of America.

A survey of the synod agenda prompts two observations concerning it: 1. A mere month is far too limited a time for churches to study and respond to it. If our churches are to become familiar with these materials, that concern them and in which they are represented, they should have several months to study and respond. 2. Reports increasingly show that our boards carry on most of the churches business with very little reference to or consultation with the synods for which they are supposed to be working. Recommendations from the boards submitted for synod decision are very few. The synodical interim committee in its "recommendations" six times uses the formula "the synod take note of. . . ." If our autonomous executives are going to run our churches' business with little or no reference to synods, why should we waste the time and money to have synods at all? Our churches badly need a return to Biblical church order (with government by elders) as well as to Biblical doctrine. Let us pray and labor for both. ●

How to Choose a Seminary Professor

Marten H. Woudstra

A Wholesome Concern

The concerns of Calvin Theological Seminary have been before the church in recent years more frequently than in the past. Only a few years ago there were several overtures before the Christian Reformed Synod to ensure the adherence of the Seminary professors to the teachings of both Bible and Creed. At the Synod of 1982 no less than five overtures out of the 25 submitted to that synod dealt with this matter.

Whatever one may say of the merits of some of the overtures then submitted, the concern which they expressed for the doctrinal purity of the denominational seminary was wholesome. They were evidence of the fact that the Christian Reformed Church still desires to be a confessionally and biblically sound church. Everyone who has the true well-being of the church of Christ at heart should rejoice in that fact. Let us keep it this way, and let us strengthen and encourage any and all attempts to keep the church from error and faithful to the biblical and Reformed teachings which, we believe are applicable also to this age of high technology and space exploration.

Just the other day, in preparing a lecture on Genesis 2 and 3, the present writer re-read what John Calvin says about the duty of man and woman to "dress and keep" the garden. Calvin's comments have a modern ring about them. They stress the need to conserve the soil and to hand it down to posterity in the same if not better condition than it was received. These are statements that could have come recently out of the office of the Environmental Protection Agency in Washington, except that Calvin gives to man's duty in this regard a Godward direction, something one does not find in current deliverances of most ecologists.

There is therefore every reason to let the confessions and the writings of the early Reformers be known to our present generations of students. To this should be added a constant dialogue with, and, if need be, a clear opposition to the current theological discussion. An almost super-human skill is required to be both confessionally loyal and abreast of current trends, benefiting from them, sifting them as to their truth value, accepting what is good and rejecting what is erroneous and contrary to divine revelation. Much prayer along with loving concern on the part of the church is needed for those who hold the office of theological professor at the denominational seminary.

Especially Urgent Now: 10 Professors Retire

The coming half-dozen years will be crucial for the future development of Reformed theology at Calvin Seminary. Within that short time span more than half of the Seminary faculty will retire from active duty. This will affect most if not all departments of theological education at the Seminary. There will be a wholesale exodus of no less than ten professors all of whom will need to be replaced by capable successors, men who are experienced in their respective fields, abreast of modern developments, and committed to the truths of the Reformation creeds, ready to defend such truths against attack and to apply them to the modern situation.

Obviously, the Christian Reformed Church has a big stake in what will happen at the Seminary within the next six years. The purpose of the present article is to alert the church to the challenge it faces and to prepare her for a meaningful role in this significant change at the school where most of her ministers are being trained. At this time I have no special words of wisdom to impart as to how the church's role can best be expressed. I am thinking of something beyond the usual steps that are laid down in the rules for appointment especially because of the magnitude of the change ahead. Shall we approach this matter wholly piecemeal?

The Changing Rules

The usual rules for denominational participation are well-known. When a vacancy occurs the church is apprised of this event and is invited to submit names of candidates deemed capable of filling the vacant chair. The response to this invitation has been gratifying thus far. The names submitted are carefully screened by the Faculty and by the "Division" most closely involved. The most prominent candidates are then invited to appear before the Faculty for an oral interview.

While this process is being followed the Faculty continues to be open to the possibility of new names being submitted that may have been overlooked. At the recent appointment procedure whereby Dr. David Holwerda was appointed to succeed Dr. B. Van Elderen, there appeared a "dark horse" upon the horizon who, upon due reflection, turned out to have many things in his favor. He was a committed scholar, adhering to the faith of the Reformation, a publicist and teacher, and one with a Korean background. The latter factor, all other things being equal, was considered a point in

his favor. As is well known, the Christian Reformed Church now is beginning to have a significant Korean "connection." Apart from this, a Korean component in the Seminary Faculty might also give us a more "minority" oriented stance and this, in turn, might help the outreach of the Seminary into other minorities, to reach these with Reformed teaching.

A significant change has recently occurred in the appointment procedures at Calvin Seminary. Previously the Faculty, having done its work, submitted one or more names to the Board of Trustees. The Board would then proceed to make a nomination for the coming synod. Under the new rules, however, the Board makes the appointment, in light of a nomination received from the Faculty. But the appointment made by the Board still is subject to the approval of the coming synod. The synod is to interview the appointee before voting on the appointment. If synod does not approve, the board shall be asked to submit a new appointment.

Away from Synod Control

The appointment of Professor D. Holwerda is the first one to be processed under the new rules. It appears to this observer that the last step in the appointment procedure, that of synodical approval (or disapproval) based on synodical interview, has been rendered more or less of no effect by the appointee's declaration that he will accept the appointment. This has also been the tenor of the publicity in the church papers. The synodical involvement in this appointment is by no means negligible. It should not be shortchanged by premature declarations.

The church's role in the appointment of Seminary professors is a significant one. The Church should have the desire to make the most of its involvement. Still, it cannot be denied that much of the most important work of selection and processing of a nomination is not directly in the hands of the church. This is what may be expected. The field of theological studies is getting increasingly complex. Many in the church will not be able to judge the qualifications of one who is to teach in the theological seminary of our church. But the church continues to have a vital stake in each and every new appointment.

On the level of the synodical interview, with its implied right of veto of the Board's action, the church will have a major role to play. Even so, questions of popularity and personality should not have the final word in what synod does and decides. Such factors are likely to influence the vote in a synodical assembly to some extent. But they should not have the decisive significance they could easily assume. Commitment to the creeds of the Reformation, the ability to tell true from false in current trends, scholarly equipment, and the readiness to promote Reformed theological learning without compromise, these and other factors similar to them, should determine how a synod votes on an appointee of the Board.

With the oft quoted words of the founders of Harvard College, the Christian Reformed Church, as well as all other true churches of Christ, has a tremendous stake in having "a literate ministry when our present ministry shall lie in the dust." Ministers come and ministers go. The same applies to Seminary professors. Soon we will all lie in the dust. Let the church of Jesus Christ with the means at its disposal be diligent in perpetuating sound theological learning at the seminaries of the land. When the ministers are trained in sound doctrine the effect of their ministry will also be felt in the land. Eternal vigilance is the price of sound orthodoxy and of wholesome Scripture proclamation. Seminaries exist in order to promote sound preaching by means of teaching sound learning. Ten professors of Calvin Seminary will retire within the next six years. Let the church which loves God's truth take notice, and let it take whatever steps it can to ensure the continuity of sound learning among us. ●

Dr. Marten H. Woudstra is a Professor of Old Testament at Calvin Theological Seminary.

WOMEN'S RIGHTS
A Much Studied Christian Reformed Issue

Garret H. Stoutmeyer

"Women and office" in the Christian Reformed Church has been an issue as far back as 1963.

That's when the Reformed Ecumenical Synod first named a committee to study the question.

It was officially brought to the Christian Reformed Synod seven years later, in 1970.

And it continnes to be studied.

There was a sharp difference of opinion when that first study committee was named in 1963 as there is today, 20 years down the road.

The Christian Reformed Synod of 1970 did appoint a study committee as recommended. That first study committee reported to the CRC Synod of 1973. Their report was referred to the churches for study and a new study committee was appointed.

The second committee reported to the Synod of 1975. The majority of the committee recognized on one hand that the Christian Reformed Church was not ready or willing at that time to open the offices of deacon, elder or minister of the Word to women; on the other hand they urged the synod to adopt the statement: "Biblical teaching is not opposed in

principle to the ordination of women to any office that men may hold in the church."

After prolonged debate and a spate of negative votes, the Synod declared "that the practice of excluding women from the ecclesiastical offices recognized in the Church Order be maintained *unless compelling biblical grounds are advanced for changing that practice.*" (Italics mine.)

Once more another study committee was appointed. Reporting in 1978, the goal of some, namely to open the offices of the church to women, was partially realized.

Consistories were now allowed to ordain qualified women to the office of deacon "provided that their work is distinguished from that of elders."

The Synod of 1979, however, reeeived such an avalanche of negative responses from classes, consistories and individuals throughout the denomination that a moratorium on the decision of 1978 was declared.

Another study committee was appointed and their report, rendered in 1981, was tabled with a new committee appointed to study "headship in the Bible." The latter committee has not yet reported.

The prolonged history of wrestling with this very important issue has been rehearsed to demonstrate that the charge or personal judgment made by a representative of the Committee for Women in the CRC, as reported in *The Grand Rapids Press* on July 9, 1983, is simply not true.

The judgment was made that "most of the reasons for the reluctance in the CRC to ordain women. . . are political, not biblical."

Political? How? Is the inferenec to be understood that the past Synods which have wrestled with this issue for the last 13 years have kept women out of office because the men were afraid that once the door is opened for women in ecclesiastical office they would just take over the business of the church?

The members of the four study committees that have reported to Synod have, I believe, literally pored over the teachings of Scripture.

While I, as a member of the Christian Reformed Church, may not agree with the conclusions of some members of the committees, I hardly believe that it is Christian on my part or anyone else's for that matter to be judgmental and say that they were politically motivated.

Further, are we to understand that the synodical delegates who prayerfully considered the reports submitted to them and then acted upon them did so politically out of fear that women are about to take over? Biblical feminists, it seems to me, have raised a very legitimate question: What does the Word of God have to say about the role of women in the church today?

There is only one sufficient argument against women's ordination: scriptural prohibition.

Is "tradition" a legitmate part of that prohibition? Only in so far as it is in compliance with scripture. It has becn said that "the church through history has been the agent that has kept women where they are. . ."

That statement, taken exactly as it stands, can be interpreted in at least two ways. One, that men have gone out of their way to keep women in an inferior position in the church. Or, the other interpretation which, I believe, is the correct interpretation, that women have not been ordained into the offices of deacon, elder or minister of the Word in most Reformed churches because the Bible has been misunderstood to forbid it.

The Word of God has not spoken as clearly to the majority of the Christian Reformed Church in the same manner as to the members of the Committee for Women in the CRC, some members of the Calvin Seminary faculty, study committee members, and ministers and congregations who have proceeded to install women deacons and women as adjunct elders in spite of Synod's moratorium.

I have, however, read the synodical directive of 1983 to treat this matter "with loving concern rather that judgmental pronouncement," and will endeavor to do so.

The off-handed but sanguine remark attributed to the president of the Synod of 1983 is much to the point. The Rev. J.D. Eppinga is reported to have said: "Be tolerant of those who disagree with you. . . .They have a right to their ridiculous opinions."

I would pray that those who see the issue so clearly and are impatiently running ahead of Synod and the present study committee will try to understand that their opinions may be as ridiculous to us as ours are to them.

What I and others like me are looking for is what the Synod of 1975 termed "compelling biblical grounds" for changing the practice of the church that has held for almost 2,000 years.

And not just the Christian Reformed Church but all churches that profess to hold to an inerrant view of Scripture.

I cannot now nor will I ever hold to what has been called "the feminist hermeneutics," namely, that since the Bible was written in an entirely different culture than that of today, the biblical writers are/were prejudiced by that culture against women's rights.

According to this approach, the Bible is fallible and can contradict itself. However, once allowance is made for "cultural conditioning," how does one determine what parts or doctrines of Scripture are of abiding authority and value? Is human reason the final authority, the judge of Scripture?

Francis Schaeffer in an article "Schaeffer on Scripture" that appeared in the Aug. 29, 1975 issue of the magazine *Christianity Today,* quotes Martin Luther as having said, "If I profess with the loudest voice and clearest exposition every portion of the truth of God except precisely that little point which the world and the devil are at that moment attacking, I am not confessing Christ. Where the battle rages, there the loyalty of the soldier is proved, and to be steady on all the battlefronts besides is mere flight and disgrace if he flinches at that point.

Finally, it is said that "we need to change people's hearts — which isn't easy to do." The "we" in the above statement refers to the Committee for Women in the CRC, and their supporters. If "compelling biblical grounds" are brought forth by the present committee on "headship," or, from any other source, it will be much easier to change people's minds, but hearts? Never! To change the heart requires the work of the Holy Spirit.

Up to this time the CRC has not shown a readiness to open the ecclesiastical offices to women for two reasons; first, the biblical prohibitions against it; second, no biblical command to do it.

What is needed as this very sensitive issue continues to be debated and threatens to divide the denomination is what the advisory committee recommended to the Synod of 1978: ". . .our love for Christ and his church must compel us to put our personal preferences aside, and to believe that the Spirit of truth will lead us into truth. . ." ●

Reprinted from the July 30, 1983 Grand Rapids Press. *Rev. G. Stoutmeyer is the pastor of the Coopersville Christian Reformed Church.*

A Capsizing Church Government

Peter De Jong

A Revealing Problem

The explosive controversy between the CRC mission organization and the Independent Presbyterian Churches in Mexico reportedly threatens the future of our denominational labors there. The matter is complex and may require appointment of a special synod committee, for how can the regular mission administration fairly act as judge and jury in a controversy involving itself? One aspect of the matter that should get some attention is its revelation of how casually church property and funds can be handled by a few executives. Among charges brought by a veteran missionary is one that they "offered and then gave to (a) visiting Committee the valuable. . . property deeds." Without the knowledge of our churches or even of their mission board, property reportedly valued at over a million dollars could be disposed of by two executives! Subsequently, the charges continue, the prospect of missionary financial support and the threat to withhold it have been used to help split the Mexican denomination.

Do such charges sound almost unbelievable? Consider what has been happening in denominational finances at home. When our church practice permitted a few executives to set executive salaries at a level far beyond what the churches pay their pastors (up to the $60,000 neighborhood) without even revealing to the churches what those salaries were,* what prevents executives from assuming wide discretionary authority in handling financial matters in other countries?

A Long Process

This state of affairs does not so much suggest a charge of misbehavior against an individual or two (Whether or not that is involved others will have to determine.) as reveal a striking symptom of one of the things that has been going seriously wrong in our changing denomination. That is the gradual transfer of power from local church elders and members to "executives" who become less and less accountable to those whom they were originally supposed to represent or to anyone else. The history of the Roman Catholic Church is the classic example of that kind of development. But it tends to be repeated in the history of all kinds of other churches, including that of our own.

Our Church Order, rooted in the Reformation (from Roman Catholic abuses) lays down as a fundamental principle that the authority entrusted by Christ to (local) consistories is "original, that of major assemblies being delegated" (Article 27). (Immediately however, that is compromised by the statement that, "The classis has the same authority over the consistory as the synod has over the classis." What authority does a body have "over" that from which it derives its own?)

This Biblical and therefore Reformed principle of our church order that the "original" authority which the Lord has given his church is that of elders and their local consistories is so largely forgotten in much of our church practice that to bring it up is sometimes almost regarded as a heresy.

I called attention to this fact in our April, 1970 issue (p. 15), recalling that 14 years before that time Rev. R. De Ridder had written a thesis on the "development of the mission order" of our churches. In it he traced among other items the shift of authority over our mission work from the local churches (1910-20) to the Synod (by 1939), to the Board (by 1944), to the executive Committee (by 1952). In the last 14 years this movement has gone much farther. Some time ago an old friend, as executive in the business world who had been

placed on the executive committee of one of our other boards, told of his amazement at finding how little the executive committee was being told about the matters it was supposed to be managing and how little the members of the committee even seemed to realize that their responsibility was for *management* and not merely *public relations*. In practice it seemed that much was being actually left to the decision and management of the officers' committee! In other words, the larger the work of the churches was becoming, the fewer were the people who actually controlled it!

The same movement toward bureaucratic decision and control is apparent when one compares the synod agendas of a couple of decades ago with those of more recent meetings. Formerly many matters were referred by boards to the synod for decision which today may or may not even be reported. The "executives" simply manage them. Similarly, members of the boards are made to feel that their main duty is to promote the work of the committee and its executives, within the classis instead of to control that work on behalf of the classis and the consistories. A while ago one board, even without apparently sensing any impropriety, reportedly informed the classes what kind of delegates they should elect to boards!

In recent years one of the means that has been developed, presumably to curb the undue control of the work of the denomination by (a few) clergy, has been the effort to get more non-clergy (or "lay") members in the boards. One observes that that effort to balance board membership in this way has evidently been rather successful. But the expected wholesome results have not been so evident. Lay members of the boards may be even less inclined than fellow clergy to challenge the increasingly assumed right of a few executives (usually clergy) to run the denomination's business.

Dr. M. Woudstra's article in this issue points out how seminary appointments are now being taken out of the hands of the synods.

In one way or another it is simply a fact that more and more power is being left in the hands of very few executives, with no one, least of all the consistories and church members assumed to have the right or duty to decide, or even know what they do. This state of affairs invites abuse. Not many years ago there was a scandal in the ministers' pension administration and before that there was one in another board. Expecting a few executives to run the churches' business without being held accountable to the churches, is exposed to and even invites suspicion and scandal. It is unfair to any individual to load him with such vast responsibilities. The annual congregational meeting in which every member present has a right to question the local church's financial report and budget is not always a pleasant experience, but it is a wholesome preventive of irresponsibility and suspicion in church business. The one part of that report and budget which virtually never gets that kind of question or scrutiny (and is perhaps most in need of it) is the large part classified as denominational quotas.

A Needed Reformation

This state of affairs is not merely a practical and threatening abuse. It is the direct result of forgetting and violating a basic Biblical principle of Reformed church order. The man who perhaps most clearly saw and exposed that fact was James Henley Thornwell who lived over a century ago. (In the April 1982 *Outlook* I reviewed his *Life and Letters*, by B. M. Palmer, published by the Banner of Truth Trust.) The orphan son of a Welsh Baptist mother, educated by a Methodist preacher-teacher and wealthy Episcopalians, he came to the reformed faith after reading the Westminster Confession of Faith. Seeing clearly that the rule of elders (Greek, "presbyters") and their assemblies was the form of church order which the Bible taught, he observed that in practice in the Presbyterian church their control of church business was being displaced by that of boards, just as it has been in our denomination. From where had these boards come? They had not come from the Bible's teaching, but from the Congregationalists who, in turn, had borrowed them from the secular business world. Thornwell warned against the consequences of that development.

> I believe that the Boards will eventually prove our masters, unless they are crushed in their infancy. They are founded upon a radical misconception of the true nature and extent of ecclesiastical power. . . (p. 233).
>
> . . . Our church is becoming deplorably secular. She has degenerated from a spiritual body into a mere petty corporation. When we meet in our ecclesiastical courts, instead of attending to the spiritual interests of God's kingdom, we scarcely do anything more than examine and audit accounts, and devise ways and means for raising money (p. 224).
>
> The Church, as organized by her Head, is competent to do all that He requires of her. He has furnished her with the necessary apparatus of means, officers and institutions, in Sessions, Presbyteries, Elders, Pastors and Evangelists. Let us take Presbyterianism as we have it described in our Form of Government, and let us carry it out in its true spirit, and we shall have no use for the sore evil of incorporated Boards, vested funds, and traveling agencies (p. 225).
>
> I am satisfied that what. . . we need most, is a revival of pure religion in all of our churches. The cause of Missions lags, and all our interests decay, because the Spirit of life, to a mournful extent, is withdrawn from our congregations. The Church has almost dwindled down into a secular corporation; and the principles of this world, a mere carnal policy, which we have nicknamed *prudence*, presides in our councils. Until she becomes a spiritual body, and aims at spiritual ends by appointed means and makes faith in God the impulsive cause of her efforts, our Zion can never arise and shine, and become a joy and a praise in the whole earth (p. 228).

As churches grow, structures are needed to coordinate their efforts, but these *must be kept accountable to the churches which they represent.* The churches' financial and business administration is not their most important concern. Their central concern must be, as Thornwell saw, the faithful living and bringing of the gospel. But, as our denominational commitment to the gospel is itself becoming increasingly subject to question, and the confidence of members and churches in that is being shaken, and is likely to be further shaken in decisions to open offices in a way forbidden by the Bible, exasperation of churches and members with the hierarchical structure, casual business management, and lack of reporting of what is done with industriously collected quotas must contribute to further strains on the more and more tenous ties that bind the denomination together.

---

*See Acts 1983, *pp. 498, 499, 701 for an effort to correct this abuse. (Compare* Outlooks *of Jan. 1983, p. 21 and March 1982, pp. 6-8.)*

THE BASIC ISSUE
in the Women in Office Debate

Edward Heerema

In the question whether women shall occupy the special offices in the church we have an issue that has proved itself to be charged with emotion, demanding on the church's time and strength, and considerably disturbing to many. In this intense discussion with its many ramifications let us be very much aware of a single deeper issue. *That deeper issue is simply this: Shall we be obedient to the Word of God?* To my mind that issue is at the center of the question we have been debating for more than a decade.

Have I raised some hackles already? Probably so. Am I suggesting that people who differ with me on this issue are being disobedient to the Word of God? Not at all. I am satisfied that all of us want to be obedient to God's Word. But the matter is not so simple. The problem is that we are no longer of one mind in our approach to the Bible. And so we have different ideas as to what obedience to the Bible means. In other words, different hermeneutical principles are at work among us.

The 1975 Biblical Decision

It had seemed clear to most of us that all we had to do was to address the question, What does the Bible say on this matter of women in office? With that simple question plainly in view our church made two important declarations at the Synod of 1975, namely,

1. "that the practice of excluding women from the ecclesiastical offices recognized in the Church Order be maintained unless compelling biblical grounds are advanced for changing that practice;" and

2. "that sufficient biblical grounds have not been advanced to warrant a departure from our present practice of excluding women from the ecclesiastical offices recognized in the Church Order."

That was language the membership of the church understood. These declarations expressed the judgment of a majority of the church as they did a majority at the Synod. The situation has not changed. *The Banner* of January 23, 1984 plainly showed that a large majority of the church membership is opposed to opening these offices to women. I have spoken to many people in the church over the past several years about this matter, and almost always I hear the people of Christ's church saying that they are opposed because they believe that God's Word forbids it. That is the bottom line for them. What a precious treasure we have in this reservoir of devotion to God's Word. Whatever complexities some may see in the interpretation of God's Word, let the church be very, very careful in what it does with this precious treasure of loyalty to the Bible. That loyalty is the church's greatest single asset after God's great gifts of His Spirit, Word and grace in Christ.

"New Interpretations"

What complications are brought in by differing ways of interpreting what the Bible says? One of these is the idea that opening the offices to women is a proper development in the life of the Spirit-led church. This development, the argument goes, is the fruition of a process begun in the church of biblical days, especially the New Testament church. This process, wrestling with powerful and deeply entrenched cultural resistances and prejudices, is the realization of full equality of men and women in the church.

It is suggested that seeds of this latter-day fruition are found in such Bible texts as Galatians 3:28 and I Timothy 3:11. Considering these we don't have to be overly concerned with Bible texts that seem clearly to limit the special offices in the church to men. The limiting texts represent an earlier expression of the mind of the Spirit. Let us, we are told, make sure that we are open to the leading of the Spirit *today.*

Obviously this approach is beset by all sorts of treacherous pitfalls. How does it square with Articles V and VII of the Confession of Faith? And when do we decide that the Spirit is leading the church beyond what the Bible teaches? Or contrary to what the Bible teaches? Is this the kind of thinking that prompted the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland to take a position on homosexuality that has been sharply criticized, also among us, as being based more on scientific, psychological and cultural considerations than it is on the Bible's teaching? Is this the kind of thinking that led the Rotterdam-Delftshaven congregation of the GKN to do away with elders and deacons and to set up a consistory made up of representatives of congregational task forces?* Is this the kind of thinking that led this same church (with official approval) to baptize twin children of a lesbian couple?

"Cultural Conditioning"

Perhaps these lamentable developments in the Netherlands are to be related to another hermeneutical notion, which has appeared in the women in office debate and has obscured the meaning of obedience to God's Word. We are told in *The Banner* of January 23, 1984 (p.7) that the restricted role

Paul prescribed for women in worship services (in I Cor. 14:34 and I Tim. 2:12) was dictated by considerations that were "local, cultural, and therefore temporal." In other words, these passages no longer apply to the church of today.

Let us take a careful look at this argument. In the first place it must be clearly understood that the case for the church's longstanding practice of limiting the special offices to men does not depend on these much debated texts in the writings of the apostle Paul. As Paul himself indicates, the matter goes back to God's original arrangement for men and women. In discussing propriety in worship Paul says in I Corinthians 11:3, "Now I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God." Then as he speaks of the proper decorum of women in worship shown by her covered head, Paul declares, "For man did not come from woman, but woman from man; neither was man created for woman, but woman for man." In I Corinthians 14:34 Paul undergirds his instruction that women "are not allowed to speak" in the "congregations of the saints," but "must be in submission," by appealing to what the Law says, that is, the writings of the Old Testament, particularly the books of Moses. In I Timothy 2:12-13 Paul states, "I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent." Then he adds, "For Adam was formed first, then Eve."

Again we have to ask whether this approach does not conflict with our Confession of Faith. When we wholeheartedly accept this Confession as our own we are committing ourselves to "believing without any doubt all things contained in them," that is, the books of the Bible; and these books, "these only," are for the "regulation, foundation, and confirmation of our faith" (Article V). How can certain parts of these scriptures serve our faith in these ways if they don't apply to us because we say they are "local, cultural and therefore temporal?" The Scripture itself gives us warrant to exempt ourselves from obedience to certain teachings in the Bible, such as those calling for circumcision or animal sacrifices. In these instances our freedom from these demands is given us by God's Word itself in the liberating work of Jesus Christ as it is taught in this Word. I know of no such exemption from the main thrust of the passages in Paul's writings which we are discussing.

It is obvious that if we do not recognize a consistent line of teaching in the Bible that women do not have an official role in the ministry and rule of the church, the passages in Paul's writings which bar them will be troublesome for us. On the other hand, our problems with these admittedly difficult passages are much less severe if we see that the apostle was giving expression to a consistent line of teaching that existed from the very beginning — from Genesis 1-3, to Proverbs 31 (portrayal of the ideal woman who is remarkably free to do many things, but who does not sit in the gate where her husband sits with the elders managing the affairs of the church-city), to the example of Jesus himself (in appointing the apostles), to the early church (in appointing the seven), to the teaching and practice of the apostles (as in I Timothy 3). Then we can still allow for cultural, temporal and even local factors in the Pauline passages in question (and in others) without giving up their real thrust, a thrust fully in harmony with the rest of Paul's writings and with the Scripture as a whole. As the Holy Spirit inspired the human authors to write the Scriptures, he did not wrest them out of the historical and cultural settings in which they wrote. Paul spoke from within a social structure that strongly disapproved of any suggestion of immodesty on the part of women as they appeared in public (see I Tim. 2:9).

He used the sharp words "disgrace" (I Cor. 11:6) and "disgraceful" (1 Cor. 14:35) in writing to the church at Corinth in which there was a spirit of proud worldliness and disorderliness.

An illustration of cultural conditioning is found in Paul's admonition to slaves in Colossians 3:22-25. Is this passage to be dismissed as irrelevant today because in our culture we no longer have slaves? Not at all. The real thrust of the passage remains even though this cultural and temporal factor is present. Those who labor for others, for the slave-masters of old or for employers of today, must do so as Christians, as slaves of Christ (Eph. 6:6). "Whatever you do," says the apostle to all of us, "work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men." A recital of a number of texts is hardly needed to show that this real thrust of the passage is fully consonant with the Spirit's instruction elsewhere in Scripture.

Return to Biblical Confession

A final word concerning the hermeneutical innovations we have been discussing appears in the plain language of our Confession of Faith, Article VII. There the salient hermeneutical principle of the *sufficiency* of Scripture is confessed. "For since it is forbidden to *add unto or take away anything from the Word of God,* it does thereby evidently appear that the doctrine thereof is most perfect and complete in all respects. Neither may we consider any writings of men, however holy these men may have been, of equal value with those divine Scriptures, nor ought we to consider custom, or the great multitude, or antiquity, or succession of times and persons, or councils, decrees or statutes, as of equal value with the truth of God, since the truth is above all. . . ." I assume we may understand "councils" to include synods and assemblies. And in the words "custom . . . or succession of times and persons" we see reference to cultural value, movement and change.

We must be obedient to this blessed Word of truth. May we be fully aware of what such obedience means today as current hermeneutical notions threaten to rob the church of its sure guide. The Spirit of truth, we have been wisely taught, always leads the church in and through His written Word, never beyond, away from or contrary to that sure Word of the living God. ●

Notes

**The RES newsletter, the source of this report, also stated that the president of this consistory was a woman.*

Dear Rev. De Jong:

I feel that I owe you an explanation of the history of the accompanying article. The article was submitted to The Banner *but was rejected. On January 30, 1984 I addressed a letter to the Board of Publications of the Christian Reformed Church protesting the loading of the January 23 issue of* The Banner *with material exclusively attacking the historic position of the church on the matter of women in office. In response the Board sent me through its secretary a gracious communication assuring me that at the meeting of the Board "the editor indicated that responsible articles taking the opposite position will not be rejected."*

This encouraged me to write the article and to submit it to The Banner. *The article was returned to me with a letter from the editor informing me that the article would not be published. I shall leave it to the judgment of the readers to decide whether the article can be called "responsible."*

Sincerely,

Edward Heerema
Cape Coral, Florida

Headship in the Bible

Laurie VandenHeuvel

The Christian Reformed Church has been dealing with the subject of women in ecclesiastical office for eleven years. This year, the synod is being presented with a fifth and we may hope, last study committee report regarding the subject.

The report consists of three sections: Majority report and recommendations, Minority Report I and its recommendations, and Minority II and its recommendations.

Signers of the Majority Report are: John A. De Kruyter, Anthony A. Hoekema, Wayne Kobes and Gordon H. Pols.

Signer of Minority Report I is Mrs. Dick (Thea B.) Van Halsema.

Signers of Minority Report II are Sarah Cook and Willis P. De Boer.

MAJORITY REPORT

Societal Landscape

The majority report correctly reminds us that the issue which vexes the church regarding women in church office does not come to us in a social, cultural and intellectual vacuum. They point out that the period of *Enlightenment*, the spirit of the French Revolution that proclaimed "liberty, equality, fraternity" bore the fruit of a "new structuration of traditional male and female roles."

In the *Industrial Revolution* factories removed many women from their homes and since that time huge numbers of women have entered every facet of the labor force.

Universal education has not only required a mandatory minimum education for women, but has motivated many women to achieve high levels of academic excellence.

A rugged spirit of *individualism* also pervades our country today and wipes out many of the distinctions which once prevailed. The individual has replaced the family as the smallest unit of society.

The criteria for awarding status, role, task, and position have become training, ability, skills, gifts, speed and efficiency. These criteria are functional, pragmatic, and economic.

The majority report correctly concludes that individualism dissolves the binding quality of *all* human relationships. It runs counter to the Biblical stress on *covenant* and the New Testament teaching on the Christian community as the *body* of Christ. Individualism's "potent and pernicious affirmation of the autonomy of the individual" destroys *authority*. Christians too have "bought into" this modern world and life view and this affects the way they see *authority, roles*, and *office*.

Exegetical studies:

In its *analysis of the Old Testament Scriptures* the majority report affirms:

1. That man was created a bi-unity, male and female. Man and woman together are God's image.
2. That "the Bible attaches significance and authority to "firstness." Creation order is God first, then man first and woman second. Woman was created to be a "suitable help" for man. She has a *dual* origin. She owes her existence to God, but also to man from whom she was taken.
3. That the relationship of Adam to woman as helper is *foundational* not only to the marriage relationship and the church, but to the man/woman relationship in general, including economics and political life.
4. That in the *fall*, woman set aside God and Adam and took the serpent as her leader.
5. That Adam was called as representative to account for Eve's disobedience.
6. That, although there was a pre-fall male position of priority, authority, and leadership with respect to woman, a *curse* on woman was that "he (her husband) shall rule over you," meaning that that rule will "tend to be a sinful or oppressive kind of rule."
7. That in the redemptive process, the *sinful distortion* of this rule is to be taken away but the *leadership role* itself is to be retained, purified and sanctified by grace.
8. That the appointed and anointed leaders of the Old Testament were men: Noah, patriarchs, Moses, judges, military leaders, kings and prophets.

Headship Concept

Affirming that the word "head" is used as a metaphor, the study committee saw its task as determining *in what sense* the word "head" was being used in each passage.

They examined two words used for head: the Hebrew word "rosh" and the Greek word "kephale." They found that although in general, the meaning of head as "source" is present in most passages, it is usually not dominant, and it is never used to the exclusion of the *ruling and authority idea*.

Christ's headship is always for the benefit of the church, but it is ruling nevertheless.

The committee also examined the word for submission—hypotasso-menoi, meaning to *rank under* or to *put into subjection.* It concluded that wives are directed to *submit themselves* to their husbands *as to the Lord*—that is, as part of their obedience to the Lord.

The committee further concluded that since Christ's headship is a headship of rule, the husband's headship is also a headship of rule. It must be a loving, self-sacrificing and enabling headship, Christ as Head of Man and Man as Head of Woman.

I Corinthians 11:3,8-9

The majority report points out that the Minority Report II wants to view "head" in this passage only as *source* to the exclusion of any *ruling* or *authority* concept. But the majority report rejects the "source" interpretation for the following reasons:

1. This passage would refer to a *spiritual* headship or "sourceship" and Christ is obviously not the spiritual *source* of every male that lives or has ever lived.
2. Nor is it proper to speak of the Father as the *source* (head) of Christ. That would give the impression that Christ was a *created* being.

The idea in this passage of *head* is that it is *ruling*—Father over Christ, Christ over man, and man over woman. The report bolsters its arguments by pointing out that Paul grounded this chain of command in the creation order: "for man did not come from woman but woman from man, neither was man created for woman but woman for man" (vs. 8-9).

I Corinthians 14:33b-35

In this command for women to keep silent in the church, the committee observes:

1. This is a *church* context.
2. It is a limited silence since Paul does allow women to say something in I Cor. 11 (However I Cor. 11 is not necessarily a church setting-LVH).
3. Paul considers this prohibition to be so strong because it *roots* in the *Law.*
4. Paul considers it to be a rule for all the congregations of his day and not just the Corinthian church.

I Timothy 2:11-15

This is the only passage that deals specifically with woman *teaching in church.*

The majority report observes:

1. That this is in a church context (3:14 and 15).
2. That the kind of teaching not open to women is teaching done in a church service, the kind of teaching that would *exercise authority* over men, the official teaching of the church.

The report points out that today, teaching is often a transfer of information and skills from the teacher to the learner.

But in that day and today in official church teaching (proclamation), the teacher (preacher, elder) is not giving his own views or imparting information.

1. He has a relationship of authority over his learners (office).
2. He expects his learners to accept and comply with his teaching as a way of life because it is the Word of God.
3. He represents the body of believers, so that his kind of teaching is a *governing* type of teaching.

For these reasons the official proclamation of the Word in worship service is closed to women. The committee observes that other kinds of teaching are open to women.

I Peter 3:1-7

In the passage the report observes:

1. The husband is here understood to be the head of the family and the head of the wife.
2. The believing wife should be subject even to an unbelieving husband.
3. The husband's headship should be loving.
4. Even though husband and wife occupy different roles in marriage they are "joint heirs of grace."

Galatians 3:28

The report observes that although men and women are one in Christ, this does not take away the role differences between them which have been established in creation. Nor does it take away New Testament instructions on the relationship between men and women.

Paul's Use of Women in Work

The report lists Paul's use of the following words to describe women who worked with him:

1. diakonos - servant, Phoebe
2. prostatis - helper (feminine form), Phoebe
3. Kopiao - toil, Mary
4. synergos - fellow worker, Euodia and Syntyche

The report observes that these words, although used to describe office-bearers and their work as well as these women, are in no way restrictive descriptions of official work or workers. The report further observes that there is no evidence that any of these ladies served, helped, or toiled as *officers* of the church.

Gifts and Offices

We have been hearing much lately about all the gifted women the church has and how they must be used in the *official* ministry of the church. The report speaks to this issue. It points out that every gift does not lead to office. "For church office the issue lies in whether and in what ways women are to be subject to men...To that issue the phenomenon of spiritual gifts does not speak."

Headship and Society

The majority report maintains that the headship-submission roles for men/women not only apply to home and church but to society as well. Their judgment is based on the structure of the Old Testament theocracy and the silence of the New Testament on female roles in education, business, and politics. The report faults the church for not giving clear Biblical directives in these matters. It faults the Christian community for following "the prevailing winds of social and structural change." On practical application of their belief, however, we are left hanging.

Preparatory to Disappointing Recommendations

It is at this point that the majority report breaks down. It is to what follows that Mrs. Van Halsema takes exception

in her Minority Report I. One reads with surprise and distress that having said everything that has been recorded thus far, the committee now sees no reason why women cannot be deacons in the consistory. The report observes that women in New Testament times seem to have performed some of the same kinds of tasks as deacons do today. Furthermore the qualities listed for deacons' wives in I Timothy 3:11 are really qualifications for *deaconesses*. The report rationalizes its change of the word "wives" to "deaconess" by saying that if these were really qualifications for wives of deacons there should also have been a list for wives of elders. Because there are no qualifications listed for wives of elders, the word "wives" of deacons must mean "deaconesses." We would like to ask this question: if the word means "deaconesses" and not "wives of deacons," why does verse 12 admonish deacons to have only one wife and omit to admonish deaconesses to have only one husband? We point this out only to show what inadequate ground the report has to justify opening the office of deacon in the consistory to women.

It is painfully puzzling how the committee could say what they have said in the report and conclude that women may serve as deacons in the consistory. It does not add up.

Minority Report I

Mrs. Van Halsema while agreeing with the body of the majority report, takes sharp exception to its conclusions and recommendations. She speaks best for herself in explaining her reasons for rejecting women in all church offices.

1. "In applying this teaching of headship, I do not find clear teaching or example in Scripture which allows women to hold any of the ordained offices of the church. . . I do not see how we can say more from the New Testament than that men served as ordained office-bearers and women helped significantly in all the ministries of the church. This is consistent with the creational norm of headship and the Genesis passages. . . . One argument advanced for admitting women to the ordained office of deacon is that women in the New Testament did the kinds of work carried out by deacons today. But we should note that these kinds of work did not result in ordination for women in the New Testament church of which they were a part."

   "Deacons have become increasingly involved in the governing of the church where the principle of male headship is reflected. This authority of deacons is an added reason. . . why we cannot argue for women deacons today on the basis of the kinds of helping work women did in the New Testament church."

2. "The second reason (for not recommending women to ordained office)" arises from the Christian Reformed Church Order by which the life of the church is regulated."

   "The Church Order of 1965, now in practice for eighteen years, reflects a twentieth-century theological explanation of church offices which emphasizes the inherent unity of the three offices and which gives deacons full place in the consistory with ministers and elders. One result has been that the work of elders and deacons is not clearly distinguished in the articles of the Church Order. . . It is difficult to see how this provise, that the work of deacons be distinguished from that of elders, can be carried out effectively. Our current Church Order does not delineate the offices of elder and deacon in consistent fashion. Articles 24 and 25 of the Church Order separate the general work of elders from that of deacons. But Article 35 blurs the distinction by stating that in every church "a consistory composed of the office-bearers" (including both elders and deacons)" is responsible for the general government of the church." This term, *consistory*, is used more than sixty times in the rest of the Church Order. It is to the consistory, without further delineation, that the following work of the church is assigned (the numbers refer to articles in the Church Order):"

   nominations for and installation of office bearers (4), nominating and calling a pastor (12), releasing a pastor (16, 17), supporting ministers (15), authority of consistory (27, 34), general government of the church (35a), evangelism and missions (73, 74), worship services (52, 53) sacraments: baptism (55, 56), Lord's Supper (59, 60), profession of faith (59a), catechetical instruction (64), transfer of membership (66), instruction and admonition to marry in the Lord (60), encouraging Christian education (71), promoting and supervising societies and youth organizations (72), admonition and discipline (78, 81, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87; and in 80 "the church" is responsible), suspension of a minister (90), suspension of an officebearer (91). The supervision of a pastor is assigned to "his calling church" (13).

   "Which of these tasks are inherently the work of elders? The Church Order gives us no guidance. . . . Where these tasks are done by elders and deacons together, it is impossible to distinguish the work of deacons from the work of elders."

   "On the basis of this Church Order I do not see how it is possible to ordain women as deacons and members of the consistory 'provided that their work is distinguished from that of elders.' Is it feasible to ask each consistory to sort out the blurred distinctions of all the 'consistory' work listed in the Church Order, under the general guidance that 'such matters as worship, discipline, education and evangelism belong to the domain of the elders' (Majority Report Recommendation 8)?- . . . . We have made a strong case for the ruling headship of elders and ministers, but we have not protected it when we recommend that women deacons serve in the consistory, since the present Church Order does not clearly distinguish between the work of elders and deacons, and since the current trend is to do more and more governing of the church by the elders and deacons together."

3. "The last reason addresses the need for us as a denomination to develop a recognized, structured way to welcome women as helpers in all the ministries of the church."

Minority Report II

This was the most difficult of the reports to unravel, causing a frustration akin to the kind one feels when trying to untangle and rewind a ball of yarn with which a kitten has been playing.

For this committee of two (Sarah Cook and Willis P. De Boer), there are three kinds of headship posited in the New Testament.

1. Source headship — refers strictly to origin of physical life.

2. Organic headship — involves a supplying of continual life and nourishment from one being to another being.
3. Ruling headship — in which on being rules, exercises authority over another. This committee (or section of the large committee) admits to only *one* instance in which this kind of headship is exercised and that is in Ephesians 1:22 "and gave Him (Christ) to be *head* over all things to the church. " The word "over" speaks unmistakably of rulership, the committee admits. But this is the only place according to them, that "head" means ruling authority.

New Testament "Head" Passages

Ephesians 5:22-23

"Wives submit yourselves unto your own husbands as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church and He is the Savior of the body."

Concerning this passage, the committee observes:

1. That the point of the passage is that Christians are to be *subject to each other* (vs. 21). Paul just picks wives as an example of mutual subjection. No ruling on the part of the husband is taught here. We are impelled to ask at this point that, if the committee is correct, are we to understand that when verse 24 speaks of the church as being *subject* to Christ, there is also a *mutual subjection* here—that Christ must in some way *subject* Himself to the church? To be consistent, the committee would have to concede that there must also be a mutual subjection between Christ and His church.
2. That Christ's headship in this passage is *organic* only. It is a headship of feeding and nurturing the church — no ruling implied. Similarly, the husband's headship is also organic and no ruling is implied. The organic headship of a man over his wife does not exert over the wife any form of ruling. His headship simply means that husband (as organic head) makes himself "available" to his wife (the body) so she "can draw life' from him.

   If the committee's explanation is true, then in verse 24 when it speaks of the "church submitting to Christ" we are to understand that the church is not submitting to any kind of *authority* of Christ. The church is simply drawing life from Him.

   It is clear that the committee's explanation is inadequate and erroneous. Although there is certainly an organic life-giving and life-receiving relationship between Christ and His church (body) and between husband and wife, the element of ruling and authority is dominant in the text. The *manner* in which the ruling is to come to expression in marriage is dealt with very tenderly in the verses that follow.

   The committee uses their interpretation of this passage to show that any tasks or offices in the church which are open to men/husbands are also open to women/wives.

I Corinthians 11:3

"But I would have you know that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God."

The committee considers "headship" in this passage to be strictly a source headship. God is the source (origin) of Christ — nothing more; Christ is the source (origin) of man — nothing more; man is the source (the rib-provider) of woman — nothing more.

The majority report in its explanation of this passage rightly objects to this. They say:

1. That if Christ came from a source — then Christ appears to be a created being, which is not true.
2. That if every male comes from Christ as source — then the implication is that every male draws life — spiritual and physical — from Christ which is obviously not true. The minority committee responds by saying that the majority committee is confusing source headship with organic headship. The two are not the same in the minority's theological system.

In addition to the majority committee's objections we could add that the minority overlooks a phrase in verse 12 where Paul points out that although woman came from man, ever since that first creative act, man has come from woman. What becomes of the "male-source" argument then?

Other New Testament Passages

I Corinthians 14:33b-35

The minority committee sees this passage simply as a call to orderly worship. The minority report does not see Paul's appeal to the "law" of God or the "command of the Lord" as very weighty. The majority report does.

I Timothy 2:11-15

The committee explains the restriction put on women in this passage as culturally conditioned. There were problems in the Christian community at Ephesus and Paul places restrictions on women in order to win "a favorable impression from the broader community so that Christians may live in peace and the mission of the church may be fostered." According to the committee these restrictions were time-bound and were placed on their whole lives and not just on the church service. In I Timothy 3:14-15 where Paul says he is writing these instructions for the "church of the living God" so they may know how to behave, this committee says Paul is not here talking about an institutional church situation — but rather about the "new Israel" in general. The committee then proceeds to reconstruct the cultural situation of that day to show that Paul's injunctions were time-conditioned.

Women Associated With Paul's Work

The minority discusses the same words as the majority committee: diakonos, prostatis, kopiao, synergos. Whereas the majority committee finds no official authority or rule aspects of these words applied to the New Testament women, the minority committee attaches great significance to these words to the point of making them determinative for women to occupy all church offices.

Conclusion

Recently the *Des Moines Register* carried a news item entitled "Revelation allows church to ordain women priests." Wallace B. Smith, prophet-president of the 230,000 member Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Mormon) recently received a direct revelation from God authorizing the ordination of women to the priesthood. The

conference approved Smith's revelation as "the mind and will of God."

We smile and dismiss this as a gross manipulation of God's self-revelation. And yet, is it different from the kinds of manipulation of God's self-revelation in His Word that we find in parts of this and other study committee reports, articles, and booklets in the CRC? To *create* a theology and manipulate Scripture to fit it, to set predetermined goals (such as women in church office) and manipulate Scripture to justify it is not only cavalier, but *sinful* . As a church and as a Synod we must take very seriously the warnings issued by God Himself in Revelation 22:18 and 19 where God pledges to remove from His Book of Life those who tamper with His Word. Corporately God guarantees the "removal of the candlestick" of any church found to be unfaithful to His Word.

May God grant that those whose responsibility it is to settle this issue this year in the CRC, may not succumb to the pressures of peers and political maneuvers, but yield to the clear testimony of God's Word. ●

Mrs. L. Vanden Heuvel is the wife of Rev. Thomas Vanden Heuvel, pastor of the First Christian Reformed Church of Orange City, Iowa.

Is Liberation Theology CHRISTIAN? (2)

Lester De Koster

Lacking the integrity openly to disclaim Christian commitment, Liberation Theology is obliged to warp the Bible, disdain the Church, and fabricate a "theology" drawn from Marxist premises in order to keep its commitments to Marxism.

That will be obvious before we are through. Basing our study entirely on Gutierrez' *A Theology of Liberation*, we will first show his reliance upon the five facets of Marxism listed above, and then show how the Bible is abused to baptize these Marxist tenets.

Gutierrez And Marxism

1. What position does LT (a la Gutierrez) take toward Marxism?

Let Gutierrez tell us: "contemporary theology does in fact find iteslf in direct and fruitful confrontation with Marxism, and it is to a large extent due to Marxism's influence that theological thought, searching for its own sources, has begun to reflect on the meaning of the transformation of the world and the action of man in history" (p. 9). [Really, now, after nineteen centuries of Church history, after the Reformation, after the Papal Encyclicals beginning with *Rerum novarum* of 1890, after the House of Orange in the Low Countries, the Huguenots in France, Cromwell in England and the Puritans in America, are you saying that the Church was only just now begun to reflect on the "action of man in history"? Were the Church and her theology born yesterday, or were you?]

When you write that, "only socialism can enable Latin America to achieve true development" (p. 111), you want us to know that, "It would be a mistake to think that this point of view, which is concerned with human values, is the exclusive preserve of scholars of a Christian inspiration. Converging viewpoints are found in Marxist-inspired positions" (p. 25). [But friend, why should anyone who takes true theology seriously, even imagine that "this point of view" — that is, LT's point of view — is in any remote sense "of a Christian inspiration"? It is all Marx's!]

You say it yourself: "Pointing the way towards an era in history when man can live humanly, Marx created categories which allowed for the elaboration of a science of history" (p. 30). [And these become, for you, the categories within which "theological reflection" will function. Nothing "Christian" about them, is there? Has the Church ever taught class struggle, violent revolt, and man's ability *to make himself* "new" through conquest of his own destiny? If so, then Marx was a Christian theologian!]

LT And Class Struggle

LT unequivocally opts for the class struggle, a concept foreign to the Bible: "The class struggle is a fact and neutrality in this question is not possible" (p. 275). [So you echo Marx and Engels in saying!]

You hold that, "Only a class analysis will enable us to see what is really involved in the opposition between oppressed

countries and dominant peoples" (p. 87). [You turn out to be very fond of insisting that "only" this way, or "only" that way — always your way — is "theological reflection" possible, making LT a very exclusive club. Lenin wrote his *Imperialism* to prove your thesis (before your time) that a class analysis alone enables us to grasp international tensions. He learned that, he said, from Marx.]

LT And Violent Revolution

Given the Marxist concept of class struggle, "a fact," no less, will LT follow the Marxist route to violent revolution?

Of course, LT will follow Marx's lead.

Gutierrez declares that, "social classes, nations, and entire continents are becoming aware of their poverty, and when they see its root causes, they rebel against it" (p. 289). [When, that is, LT has joined the Marxists in helping the Latin American poor to recognize the fact of class struggle, then the poor are ready for action! So Marx, of course, taught.]

What action? Your answer: "Only a radical break from the status quo, that is, a profound transformation of the private property system, access to power of the exploited class, and a social revolution that would break this dependence would allow for the change to a new society, a socialist society" (pp. 26-27). [Only an echo, of course, of *The Communist Manifesto*!]

Rebellion, however, is not innocent business. It involves violence. Marx and Engels' *Communist Manifesto* was a ringing call to just such violence, based on seeing history as class struggle.

Gutierrez is prepared to meet that option without flinching, and commends those "who substitute working for the Kingdom with working for social revolution" even to the extent of going underground: "The political situation in Latin America together with the subversion of the status quo advocated by these groups force them to become at least practically clandestine" (p. 103). [Marxism had led the way, and here "Christianity" follows the leader underground!]

"Moreover," you add, "as an awareness of existing legalized violence grows, the problem of counterviolence is no longer an abstract ethical concern. It now becomes very important on the level of political efficacy" [Put more clearly, violence works!]

Or, as you put it, "the political activity of Christians takes on new dimensions which have caught by surprise. . . the ecclesial structures" (p. 103). [Surprise? You seem unaware that violence in obedience to divine mandates, even revolutionary violence designed to liberate the Church for free proclamation of the Word, is nothing so "new" in history; what incenses the Pope — not "surprises" him — is that LT promotes violence under the banner of class struggle as defined by Marx, and calls *that* "Christian" obedience.]

Eager to justify Marxist-inspired class struggle, and resulting revolutionary violence, you attempt a crude, ancient subterfuge (which will be repeated when you come at last to facing the Christian's obligation to love his enemies): you say, "The exploitation of man by man in Latin America is a situation of injustice that can be called institutionalized violence." [Isn't that just a little too obvious? Every rebel from time immemorial has justified his lawlessness by accusing others of first oppressing him! Every criminal accuses society of giving him a raw deal — he hits back because the world did him in first! And if your Marxist-inspired rebellion does ever succeed in Latin America, the losers will go underground and accuse the "new" order of institutionalizing violence! There is no end of leaves in that book — as history has repeatedly shown.]

Obviously only the gullible will concur with your saying, "Let us by all means avoid equating the *unjust violence* of the oppressors (who maintain this despicable system) with the *just violence* of the oppressed (who feel obliged to use it to achieve liberation)" (pp. 108-109). [Neat, but transparently only a deceptive device — one man's meat another man's poison, and all depends upon who thinks himself maltreated — is this "theology"?]

For LT, however, "This radicality has led us to see quite clearly that the politics of the arena is necessarily conflictural. More precisely, the building of a just society means the confrontation — in which different kinds of violence are present — between groups with different interests and opinions" (p. 48). [This is, indeed, the teaching of Marx, but what, beyond your mere assertion, qualifies it as an element in "theological reflection"?]

LT And The New Man Via Revolution

Having followed Marx thus far, LT goes the rest of the way in asserting that the "new man" emerges from the revolutionary enterprise:

"History . . . is the conquest of new, qualitatively different ways of being a man in order to achieve an ever more total and complete fulfillment of the individual in solidarity with all mankind" (pp, 32-33). [History, then, is redemptive!]

Gutierrez leaves no doubt of his (like Marx's) view that historical struggle is the way to human salvation: "It is important to keep in mind, that beyond — or, rather, through — the struggle against misery, injustice, and exploitation the goal is the *creation of a new man*" (p. 146). [This, too, is what Marx anticipated. In fact, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union has the "making of a new man" as part of its official program. Your "theological reflection" runs on Marxist tracks all the way!]

Summary

Let us pause, now, to reflect for a moment where "theological reflection" has led us so far, drawing other quotations from Gutierrez:

a) "Theology" is criticism: "We pay special attention in this work to the critical function of theology with respect to the presence and activity of man in history . . . the struggle to construct a just and fraternal society, where people can live with dignity and be the agents of their own destiny" (Intro., p. x). [And theology gets us into the class struggle].

b) "Liberation" implies man's remaking himself: "*Liberation* emphasizes that man transforms himself by conquering his liberty through his existence and history" (p. x). [Small wonder, as we shall see, that LT ignores the Biblical doctrine of the Fall, as did Marx. Else how could men remake themselves?]

c) Men brought to adulthood through Marxist social analysis stand in judgment on the Church — with LT approval: "The Christian faith and the Church are being radically challenged . . . to show what significance they have for a human task which has reached adulthood" (p. xi). [Man calls Church to account, instead of the other way 'round!]

d) LT will push beyond the Bible because a theology which "has as its points of reference only 'truths' which have been established once and for all — and not the Truth which is also the Way — can be only static and, in the long run,

sterile" (p. 13). [This "Truth" which is also the "Way" seems to have been revealed through Marx.]

e) All this being so, "Theology as critical reflection on historical praxis is a liberating theology.... This is a theology which does not stop with reflecting on the world, but rather tries to be a part of the process through which the world is transformed" (p. 15). [In short, "liberation theology" sets about the baptism of a Marxist-oriented violent transformation of society; Marx without wishing it was the original "liberation theologian"!]

LT And The Church

Having walked in the light of Marxism thus far, LT has no hesitance about ordering the Church to take the Marxist path which LT sets before her:

"Participation in the process of liberation is an obligatory and privileged *locus* for Christian life and reflection" (p. 49). [LT or else!]

"In Latin America, the Church must place itself squarely within the process of revolution, amid the violence which is present in different ways" (p. 138). [Now that Marx has illumined the "way," the Church "must" follow!]

And does LT mind, then, redefining the role of Church and Christianity to fit Marxist categories? Not at all! Gutierrez declares that, "rather than define the world in relation to the religious phenomenon, it would seem that religion should be redefined in relation to the profane" (p. 67). [Not the clearest of language, is it, but the import is unmistakable: Marxism will set the agenda for the Church.]

To make sure, Gutierrez adds: "there is now but a single vocation to salvation, beyond all distinctions, giving religious value in a completely new way to the action of man in history, Christian and non-Christian alike. The building of a just society has worth in terms of the Kingdom, or in more current phraseology, to participate in the process of liberation is already, in a certain sense, a salvific work" (p. 72). [Whatever you mean by "in a certain sense," it appears that secular Marxists are, as it were, baptized through participation in violent revolution!]

This, not surprisingly, leads Gutierrez to add that this "presupposes an 'uncentering' of the Church, for the Church must cease considering itself as the exclusive place of salvation and orient itself towards a new and radical service of the people" (p. 256). [Who, then, wins? Marx or the Church? Not, you may be sure, the Church!]

The presiding "Pope" for the "uncentered" Church will be (in absentia) Karl I! His diocese at least the parish of South Mercuria.

How the Bible is warped to bless the pontificate of Pope Karl I will be the subject of a concluding article. ●

The foregoing has been developed from a lecture given at Mid-America Reformed Seminary in October 1983, and will later appear in expanded form in a publication by The Christian's Library Press.

Dr. Lester De Koster lives at Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Women in Office
AN ATTACK ON SCRIPTURE

Arthur Besteman

Recently an excellent editorial entitled "*Women In Office — Scripture in Disrepute*" appeared in *Christian Renewal.* The managing editor John Hultink in the February 20, 1984 issue contends, and correctly so, that in the current debate concerning the matter of women and ecclesiastical office, much more is involved than simply an attempt to open the offices to female members of the church. Much more basic, says Mr. Hultink, is the attack upon the authority of Scripture. He writes: "In spite of costly lessons from the recent past, the desire to place women behind pulpits and in consistory rooms has become so overwhelming in some reformed circles that the authority of Scripture is being challenged as a result."

That one's view of Scripture is of vital significance in the present discussion is illustrated in the January 23, 1984 issue of *The Banner.* The editor of *The Banner* who has become a vocal proponent for the opening to women of offices in the Christian Reformed Church writes: "The church would be well served if we who say that the Bible allows women to hold office in the church frankly admit that we have made a hermeneutical decision: we have decided how to interpret certain Bible texts." Although I strongly differ with the position taken by the editor, he is to be commended for his admission.

Too long we have been told by the proponents of women in ecclesiastical office that it is merely male chauvinism which is keeping women out of office in the Christian Reformed Church. Men, we are told, are fearful that they will lose their monopoly on authority in the church, an

authority which they have usurped to themselves. More recently we have been informed that it is the older, less educated in the church which is keeping women out of the offices in the church, and so, for some, it has become a matter of waiting until the younger and supposely better educated segment of the church's membership gains the ascendency.

But now we have a proponent of women in ecclesiastical office admitting "that Paul was prescribing a restricted role to women in the service of worship when he wrote I Corinthians 14:34 and I Timothy 2:12." and that "One should not try to make these texts say the opposite of what they seem to be saying to the ordinary reader." This great admission however is followed immediately by the declaration that "the reasons for the restrictions were local, cultural, and therefore temporal."

It matters not then that the apostle Paul in I Corinthians 14 declares that what he is writing under the guidance of the Holy Spirit is rooted in the law, the revelation of God given in the Old Testament Scriptures. Nor does it matter that in I Timothy 2 Paul, in making his prohibition in regard to women, appeals to the creation ordinance. Since we should not according to the proponent of women in office make these texts say the opposite of what they seem to be saying, we will simply make them of none effect by declaring that they are local, cultural and therefore temporal. And so we have a new hermeneutics.

The church should be aware of that fact when she gathers in synodical session in June to consider that report of the committee on headship. Those who adopt a new hermeneutic in order to justify the opening of ecclesiastical offices to women will sooner or later find themselves applying their principles of interpretation to other teachings of Scripture. A writer in the recent issue of the *Mid-America Messenger* says: "The story of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Gereformeerd) is too well known among us to need a lengthy rehearsal. Officially it allows for homosexuality as an alternate life-style. Officially it works hand-in-glove with the World Council of Churches which severely criticizes any form of capitalistic society while supporting communistic terrorists. Officially it leaves in office a man who denies the substitutionary atonement of our Lord Jesus Christ. Officially it is seeking union with the Reformed Church (Hervormd) which tolerates within its ministry men of every stripe, including those who deny the deity of our blessed Savior. And while these and many other positions were *not* occasioned by opening ecclesiastical office to women, they are justified by the same kind of biblical interpretation."

Hultink, in the editorial referred to earlier in making reference to those who have attacked the authority of Scripture, adopting the new hermeneutic in order to open the offices in the church to women, writes: "It will not take much imagination to see where this unreformed view of Scripture will take us, for it is a view already practiced by many. Kuitert is of the opinion that the Genesis account about Adam and Eve is culturally conditioned. Wiersinga is of the opinion that the biblical teachings about sin are outdated and Harpur sincerely believes that the biblical teaching that Jesus ascended into heaven is archaic. Others argue that Christ and the apostles were simply children of their time. What they said and taught should not be taken too literally. Having set out on this perilous course, it is only a question of time before the fundamentals of the Christian faith are discarded. Who then will apologize to our children a generation from now for having given them stones for bread?"

When the synod of the Christian Reformed Church meets in June of this year there will be voices raised pleading for the abandonment of the position permitting only men to serve in the ecclesiastical offices. In making this plea the proponents of women in office will be attacking the position which the church under the guidance of the Holy Spirit has held for nearly two thousand years to be the requirement of Scripture. Those who make this plea will be appealing to the new hermeneutic. The delegates to synod must ask themselves the question: "If the teachings of the apostle Paul given by divine inspiration, in which he appeals to the law and the creation ordinance can be dismissed as being local, cultural and therefore temporal, what then is to prevent other teachings of the Bible from being treated in the same way?" In fact one wonders how many years it will be before the gospel declared in John 3:16 is dismissed as being merely local, cultural and temporal. The history of other churches with which we have had a close relationship shows that the concern just raised is not unfounded but rather must be seriously considered.

The concluding words of Hultink in his editorial deserve our affirmation: "The vitality of Christianity is its unwavering confession that Scripture is the authoritative Word of God. And that Word of God is universally valid for all peoples, of all places, for all times until the end of this age."

Rev. Arthur Besteman is the pastor of the North Street Christian Reformed Church of Zeeland, Michigon.

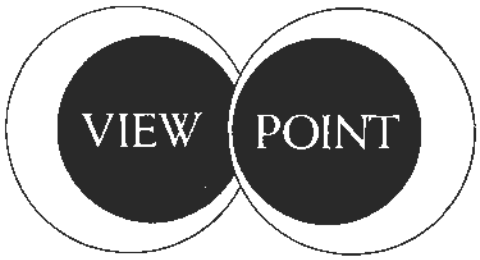
Who Am I?

Glenn P. Palmer

I am a Roman citizen, and I am better than the Jews. Of course, you would expect me to say that, but it is not I who said it, but a popular Jew who attracted many crowds. He said, "I tell you the truth, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith." What is even more astonishing is that I am a member of the finest war machine on the earth. I serve at Capernaum to keep order among the Jews and to serve as a frontier defense against the Arabs. Who am I?

I am shaped like an egg, being a very fat man, but it would be foolish to call me that to my face. In the same way it would be imprudent to make jokes about the ancestry of the father of our nation, even if he had a less than honorable origin. For I am the king and I would not take it lightly, especially from a Jew. With my cousin and brother nations we captured the city of Palms (Jericho) and forced the Israelites to pay me tribute for 18 years. Although a king, yet I arose upon hearing that a tributary brought a message from God. Who am I?

Lt. Glenn P. Palmer is stationed at Oostende, Belgium.



On Women IN OFFICE

J. Tuininga
Lethbridge, Alberta

From the sublime to the ridiculous — that is how one might describe recent developments in our circles with respect to the Woman's issue. What began perhaps as a needed corrective to our thinking regarding women has now developed to ridiculous proportions. The completely secular and even revolutionary overtones of the Women's Liberation Movement are now being felt in our own circles. One wonders where it will all end.

Two recent examples: *Calvinist Contact* reports on the annual retreat of the Committee for Women in the CRC (a self-styled movement with revolutionary overtones), at which Marchiane Rienstra spoke. Says the reporter: "We celebrated communion together and I could sense that all of us were profoundly moved."

First of all, here is a complete disregard of all biblical principles with respect to the sacrament of communion: it is not "in the assembly of the people of God" (Belgic Confession, Art. 35) under proper supervision; it is a denial of the unity and universality of the church as stated in Gal. 3:28. The latter text has had to carry a lot of illegal cargo under the service of trying to get women into church office, but here it is blatantly ignored. We have come full circle.

According to recent writers in *The Banner*, we may now call God "our Mother" and we should no longer sing songs which discriminate against women: "Rise Up O Men of God;" etc. We'll have to eliminate phrases like, "Brothers, we are treading where the saints have trod;" "Ye that are men now serve him!" "All men, bring your gifts before Him" etc.

But that isn't all: Imagine the metamorphosis that will have to overtake the Bible. Terms like "brotherhood" (Zech. 11:14; I Pet. 2:17), "brotherly love" (Rom. 12:10; Heb. 13:4; II Pet. 1:7) and "brethren" (Rom. 1:13; II Cor. 1:8; Gal. 6:1 & countless others) will have to be eliminated or added unto.

How utterly absurd! A little child can understand that these terms (like "man" in Gen. 1 are used in the *generic* sense and include women as well. But apparently some of the intellectuals among us cannot understand that. They seem to have a morbid fear of anything that sounds masculine. Too bad, how sad. ●

(Rev.) Sebastian T. Cammenga
Holland, Michigan

An outstanding umpire in baseball's finest hour, was known for his strong, although peculiar expression when a player was judged by him to be "safe" or "out." Although not expressing himself in the best of English grammar, he would loudly announce, "It ain't noth'in 'till I calls it; but what I call it, IT IS!"

I find rather infrequent disputes among the millions of fans the world over, concerning umpires' decisions. I discover no demand at all to change rules of this traditional (regulation) sport.

In my denomination, however, which I cherish dearly, I encounter plenty of pleading to alter Spirit-inspired, (although not infallible) regulations. In order to fit women into offices to which Christ chose twelve men, I even detect a near demand to change the Scripturally-set standard which declares God made woman out of the man, to be his proper helper, his assistant to rule in God's Name, thus serving God together with him. In God's plan, this is the woman's most honorable position and proper place.

Suppose all of us listen more closely to the Umpire of the Universe, to the King of His Church, as He Himself divinely determines when in His Church women are "safe" (saved) and/or when they are officially: "out."

I tremble to think of present and far-reaching consequences if we try to argue with THAT Umpire of Heaven! I would not, for a moment, dare to pray that He help Synod, or my Classis, or my Consistory, to change HIS rules. Would you?

(Rev.) Warren Lammers
Dutton, Michigan

The time has come to be strong. For the Christian Reformed Church is desperately in need of courageous and fearless soldiers who dare to obey God's Word. Too long many of the members in our denomination have been weak-hearted or asleep, while others are proposing with clever arguments disobedience to the inspired, authoritative Word of God.

There is a decision facing Synod 1984 regarding the placing of women in ecclesiastical office. Some in our denomination eagerly desire this. Others view this as unbiblical and wrong. Meanwhile a host of people blindly walk along not knowing what to think.

How is it that Biblical scholars in the same church come to such opposite conclusions? Because some have adopted the New Hermeneutic which labels certain texts "historically conditioned", they think these texts have been "legally" silenced or twisted around to mean something other than what they say (eg I Tim. 2:11,12; I Tim. 3:2-12).

When Jesus faced temptation in the wilderness, He answered boldly, "It is written." He did not argue or debate with the devil. He did not ask Satan if these texts were historically conditioned. Today as in the Garden of Eden, Satan asks, "Has God really said?" "Or was it only the human being Paul who said?"

To those in our church who in innocent, godly fashion want to obey the whole Bible, these advocates of the "New Hermeneutic" would say, "You don't really understand! The intellectual people who really understand these things can interpret the Bible better than the average person in the pew. Therefore, you ought to trust them." People, the church has heard that argument before. The heresy of Gnosticism used it in the early church to say that the common believer was not as advanced in his faith or as important as the ones with "advanced" knowledge. The woman "Jezebel" in the church of Thyatira taught her followers by clever reasoning to justify sinful acts (Rev. 2:20). The Roman Catholic Church prior to the Reformation also reasoned that the common believer was not able to read and understand the Bible correctly; therefore the scholars ought to tell him what to believe. Now again, some tell us that if we reject their "new" argument, we are not as intelligent as they.

But "behold your calling Christian, that not many wise after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called" (I Cor. 1:26, 27). And remember as well, that it is written in I John 2:27 "And as for you the anointing which ye received of Him abideth in you and ye need not that any one teach you".... but "His anointing teacheth you concerning all things and is true."

Yet some would argne that anyone, male or female, can hold office as long as he or she has the talents for it, (as if talents negate scriptural advice). In Numbers 16, Korah, Dathan and Abiram along with 250 princes thought that they were just as qualified for office as Moses and Aaron. But God thought differently. Judah's King Uzziah was an able king. He apparently thought he had the gifts for the priesthood, but when he tried to burn incense unto the Lord, the Lord struck him with leprosy.

Today a few outspoken women maintain, in spite of the words of the Bible, that they *feel* called of the Lord to serve as deacon, elder, or pastor. But Christians, let us never dare to subjugate the Lord's Word to human feelings. The prophet Balaam (Numbers 22-24) was a good enough public speaker who felt the urge to prophesy and wanted to accept Balak's offer. But the Lord did not like what he was up to.

What does all of this mean? When we open the pages of the Bible and find God's explicit prescriptions regarding office bearers, we are duty-bound to obey and accept them as decisive regardless of human reason or feeling.

Therefore, to those who argue in favor of a new understanding of office in contrast to the Bible's "It is written," we have to say: "We plead with you. Stop leading God's people astray. Stop trying to teach them that disobedience to God's Word is acceptable. Stop letting your feelings override what God has written. Certainly His Holy Spirit was not mistaken! We plead with you; stop deceiving God's people!"

Some think that it is only a matter of time; that if the arguments are presented persistently enough, or politely enough, or persuasively enough, sooner or later they will succeed in getting the members of our denomination to think that this "slight" change is acceptable. However, it will never be acceptable. For it is not merely a matter of one opinion pitted against the other. It is simply a matter of obedience. Will we obey God's Word as "it is written," or will we disobey and spinelessly be fashioned according to this world.

The choice is simple. Do we obey or do we disobey?

Let it be declared by all who truly love their Lord. We will obey God's Word; if that means we shall be unpopular, so let it be. (Neither Jesus nor the apostle Paul have always been popular.) If that means we shall suffer for it, then so let it be. If that means we shall be ridiculed, harangued, and denounced for it, then so let it be. Even if we should have to sign our signatures in blood or die for it, so let it be.

We would rather obey God's Word than live.

Fellow Christians: It is a time to be strong. Let us, like Luther, say, "I cannot do otherwise. Here I stand, so help me God."

God on the Side of the Poor

"It is the great misunderstanding of this time that 'God stands on the side of the poor.' God does not stand unconditionally on the side of the poor, or of the rich, of the black or of the white, of the oppressed or of the oppressors...! People who say this seriously misrepresent the Bible. It plainly teaches that God stands on the side of all who sincerely love Him, poor, rich, black, white, oppressed, and also of authorities if they serve Him. Only by way of recognizing this can genuine social improvement come." P.D.J.

Note: This is a free translation from the Dutch Feb. 4, 1984 Reformatie's *quotation of the concluding editorial of Dr. A. Zeegers in the now defunct periodical* Called to Freedom.

God Doesn't Call Us To Do What He Forbids

Sandra Heynen
Sioux Center, Iowa

As the debate about women in office goes on, a certain pattern of argument has been voiced repeatedly, especially by women who aspire to the pastorate. It goes like this: I have the gifts necessary for a minister; many others have recognized my gifts. It is wrong not to use the gifts God has given. *Therefore,* God must be calling me to this office and it must be wrong for the Christian Reformed Church to forbid me to follow this call because I'm a woman. When put this way it all sounds very logical. This line of reasoning appeared a couple of years ago in an issue of *Insight.* "Ren and Jan" strongly encouraged a confused young woman to prepare to become a preacher, concluding that if she had the necessary talents and felt a desire to enter the ministry, then there was no doubt that God was calling her to do so. (What the Bible says about it or what her Church teaches is apparently irrelevent!)

REFORMED FELLOWSHIP, INC.
4855 Starr St., S.E.
GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN 49506

SECOND CLASS
POSTAGE PAID AT
GRAND RAPIDS, MICH.

There is a dangerous thing about logic. You can reach a very logical yet totally erroneous conclusion if you start with a faulty premise, one that ignores some crucial information. A person who is given directions in an unfamiliar town, if he starts from the wrong intersection, although he follows the directions perfectly, will still end up in the wrong neighborhood.

As Christians trying to live our lives in obedience to God's will, we can safely begin in only one place. We can not begin with ourselves — what we have, what we feel, etc. We must begin at the revealed, written Word of God. It is the only infallible, unchanging, objective guide by which we can evaluate our varying experiences and direct our desires into correct avenues of service. The Lord has assured us that the Bible is true, reliable and unchanging (II Tim. 3:15-17, Matt. 5:17-18, II Peter 3:14-16, I Cor. 14:37, 38, Rev. 22:18-19, etc.) Therefore, if the Bible forbids something, it just isn't possible that God will ever "call" someone to do that! For example, the Bible says "Flee fornication" (I Cor. 6:18 KJV). Despite the prevailing modern attitude influenced by situation ethics, it will never be "OK" for any of us to linger at the door of sexual temptation. We are still supposed to hurry away from a compromising situation, no matter how silly and inhibited that makes us look to our society. In the same way, since the Bible plainly states that women are to remain silent in the churches (I Cor. 14:33-34) and may not hold authority over men (I Tim. 2:11-12), we must unavoidably conclude that God will never call a woman to be a minister!

It really seems sad and narrow-minded to assume that these valuable gifts which could be used well in the ministry by men, can not be used just as wonderfully in other ways by women. Speaking ability, upright character, insight into biblical truth, scholastic ability, empathy with peoples' problems — all these gifts and more—could be profitably used in all kinds of careers and kingdom endeavors other than church offices. As Reformed Christians we should be aware that our God can be served and glorified in any occupation — unless it is one that God has forbidden us to pursue. ●

CONFERENCE ON CHURCH OFFICE

Peter De Jong

On May 4 about 200 people, coming from some 55 Christian Reformed Churches, some as remote as Washington, California, Vermont and Ontario, met at the Berwyn Church in Chicago for a "conference of Concerned Christian Reformed Church office-bearers adhering to the Biblical and historic Reformed view of ecclesiastical office."

At a morning session Dr. George Knight of Covenant Theological Seminary at St. Louis presented a thorough review of the Bible's teachings regarding both the equality of men and women and the distinct roles the Lord assigns to each in home and church. At the afternoon session Rev. Rein Leestma of Lynwood, Illinois, focused attention on the issue now confronting Christian Reformed churches in the drive to place women in office in defiance of the Bible's teaching. He related it to faulty views of the Bible's authority and, correspondingly of church office, already expressed by synods over a decade ago. As the church moves in this wrong direction, he urged refusal to participate in and support whatever action is taken in this anti-Biblical direction.

After the discussion the assembly accepted the following testimony:

> We, the undersigned office-bearers and former office-bearers of the Christian Reformed Church affirm by this testimony the historic biblical position regarding women and ecclesiastical office (I Cor. 14; I Tim. 2,3).
>
> Whereas neither the Old or New Testament permit women to hold ecclesiastical office; and
>
> Whereas no compelling biblical grounds have been advanced to allow for women in such offices; and
>
> Whereas the scripture cannot be broken (John 10:35); and
>
> Whereas the biblical teaching regarding ecclesiastical office is expressed in the Reformed confessions (Belgic Confession, Art. 30), and in the Church Order (Art. 3) and
>
> Whereas the Church for nearly 2000 years has understood this to be the requirement of Scripture;
>
> Therefore, we reject any method of biblical interpretation which sets aside the clear intent and teaching of Scripture and call upon the synod of 1984 of the Christian Reformed Church to reaffirm and maintain this historic position regarding ecclesiastical office based on the Scripture and expressed in our Confessions and the Church Order. We are convinced that the continued unity and well-being of the Church demands such an affirmation.

This was signed by 111 immediately. A number of them and others who were present plan to pursue the matter with their consistories with a view to addressing the coming synod. (Tapes and transcripts of the talks are expected to be available.)