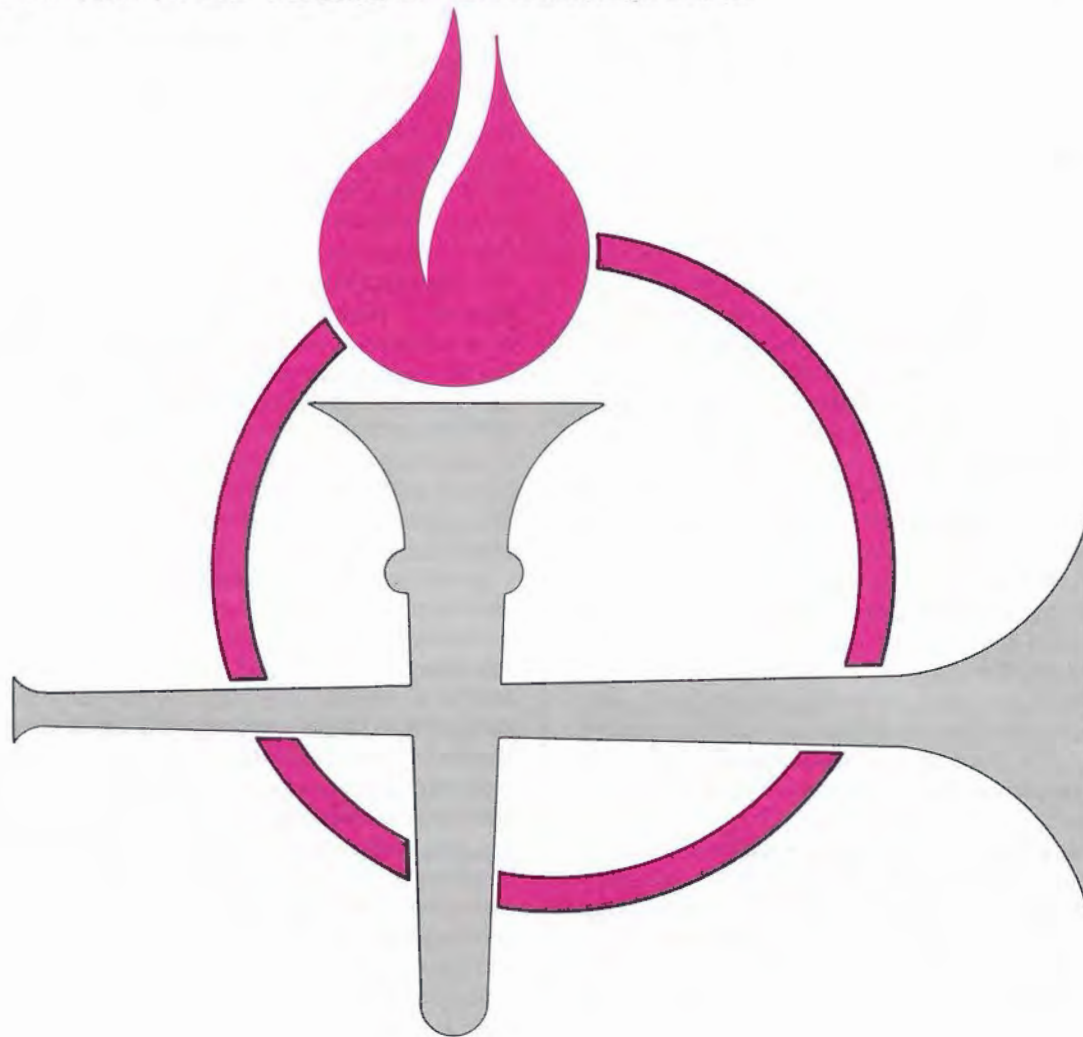


THE OUTLOOK

DEVOTED TO THE EXPOSITION AND DEFENSE OF THE REFORMED FAITH

NOVEMBER 1984



THE REFORMED ECUMENICAL SYNOD
COMMON GRACE
INFALLIBLE ASSEMBLIES?

The Next Crusade?

Peter De Jong

Many readers of the Christian Reformed Churches' *Banner* were likely startled to find it's September 17, 1984 issue largely devoted to the discussion of homosexuality. It appears that the successful effort to override the Biblical prohibitions of women in church office may now be followed by a comparable effort to break down the churches' traditional and Biblical opposition to homosexuality.

All this is hardly new or original. We are only too familiar with the movement in the larger Liberal denominations in this direction and many people prominent in the news media as well as many Liberal politicians have been making a fad out of attempting to break down what moral and legal restraints still exist in our society against this kind of perversion. The old mother churches of many of us in the Netherlands have also been somewhat ahead of us in this movement. A recent visitor to the Netherlands commented that about the only concern that seemed to be generating much enthusiasm in many of those emptying churches was the drive to welcome homosexual practice.

The September 17 *Banner* included a variety of materials and expressions of opinion. Among them was a summary of the Synod decisions of 1973 which concluded that homosexual practice must be condemned. Several of the other articles were sharply critical of the Synod's condemnation and some aimed at bringing the churches to accommodate this way of living.

Our Flawed Studies

Regarding the churches' stance, we must recall that the report which the 1973 Synod accepted, while it finally condemned homosexual practice, did this only after it had undercut the Biblical ground for that condemnation. The report, began with an uncritical acceptance of some psychologists' sharp distinction between a homosexual condition and homosexual practice. Then it said, "Whether the judgment which the Old Testament makes on homosexuality would be the same if such a distinction had been known we cannot say at this point. But therefore we cannot simply apply the Old Testament prohibition without considering whether our knowledge of homosexuality may not modify to some degree

our moral judgment about the homosexual practices of such persons." Treating the New Testament condemnations of such behavior in the same way, it said, "But again we need to ask whether the judgment of Paul applies to those who are homosexuals as we have defined them, i.e., those who are constitutionally homosexual. . . ." Its final conclusion condemning the practice is also qualified by the stated principle that "biblical injunctions and prohibitions are to be honored in every instance where they are not overborne by either external necessity or by a higher value."

Even this weakened and wavering discouragement of practices that God's word condemns as "abominations" which called for the death penalty and moved Him to destroy their practitioners (Leviticus 18:22-29; 20:13; Romans: 1:26-32), Morris N. Greidanus revealed in the above mentioned *Banner* (p.14 f.), were too strong for the writers of our *Contemporary Testimony*, who in their "carefully" picked words said, "Sexuality can become disordered in our broken world, but Christ's renewing work gives hope for order and healing, and surrounds suffering persons with a compassionate community." Even reducing the matter to a mere "disorder", Greidanus observes, is still too "negative" to accommodate the homosexuals who want their way of life affirmed as legitimate for Christians, and he would have us "accept the basic principle that homosexuals are not responsible for their condition".

How Must We Help?

Especially prominent in the *Banner* writings, as also in the '83 Synod report on the subject, is the suggestion that in order to help the homosexual we must be so sympathetic that we must really stop condemning the practice, must not call it sin and may not consider one responsible for it. Only so, it is intimated, can we give any help to him or her. It is significant that Douglas Houck, director of Metanoia Ministries of Seattle, points out from bitter experience that the denomination's approach in its report which more or less assumes that homosexual orientation is a fixed characteristic for which one is not responsible and which cannot be changed, is a false notion which is one of the biggest obstacles

to giving any real help. He points out that the opposite is true. This underscores, in effect, what Paul wrote to the Corinthians (2 Cor. 6:9-11), "Don't you know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral... nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders... will inherit the kingdom of God. And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God." While we have to be sympathetic with the sinner, remembering, as Paul reminds us that none of us is outside of that category (Rom. 3:22), we cannot possibly begin to give any real help as long as we refuse to identify sin as sin, seek to excuse or justify it, call it a "right", or even, as some clerics are doing, dignify this way of life as a "gift of the Spirit." One is reminded of Calvin's comment that the devil by trying to keep people from identifying sin endeavored to make it incurable.

As was pointed out at somewhat greater length in an article in the May, 1982 *OUTLOOK* ("Gay Right or Old Vice"), this way of living is not in any way a modern development or a new discovery, but an old vice that has characterized paganism from its early days. The Old Testament prohibitions and warnings were not the products of ignorance but the warnings of God against the advanced moral degeneracy that finally, as in the case of Sodom, called for his annihilation of its practitioners. The Old Testament's frequent references to Sodom's destruction from Gen. 18 on as an object lesson and historical anticipation of hell are highly significant in this connection. Similarly, the Apostle Paul's explanation of this kind of perversion as both a judgment upon men's deliberate rejection of God and as their progressive degeneration under that judgment (Rom. 1:26ff., "For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections. . . .") sheds further light on the matter. These warnings were not to condemn but to move to repentance and salvation.

When our "theological experts" insist on "interpreting" these Biblical warnings as products of ignorance instead of as the Divine explanations and warnings that they are, they merely give us one more example of their growing habit of confusing God's Word with the devil's, and whether they realize it or not, make their significant contribution toward helping the apostate society and churches "ripen" in preparation for the Divine judgment which the Bible everywhere assures us is approaching.

The Growing Rift

For a number of years the Laymen's *NEWS BULLETINS* labored, often with little thanks, to alert church members throughout the denomination to the symptoms of breakdown in doctrine and conduct that was taking place. Since the demise of that publication, the churches' paper, *THE BANNER* has been doing that for us, although, unlike the laymen, it is promoting the process. This propaganda *BANNER* on Homosexuality appears at exactly the time when larger numbers of people than ever before* are asking how much longer they can in good conscience support the present church leadership, and whether the time has not come when a conscientious Christian must like the fathers of 100 and of 150 years ago, break the "unequal yoke" with unbelief (2 Cor. 6:14 ff). It may help them make up their minds. ©

*A recent report tells of 600 people at a Northwest Iowa meeting approving written rejections of last June's un-Biblical synod decisions.

THE OUTLOOK

(USPS 633-980)



Published Monthly July-August Issue Combined

"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) 896-6267.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES: Henry Vanden Heuvel, President; Jay A. Wesseling, Vice-President; Arthur Besteman, Secretary; Peter Wobbema, Jr., Assistant-Secretary; John Engbers, Edward J. Knott, 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, MI 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, MI 49506

Contents

November 1984 Volume XXXIV No. 9

The Next Crusade	2
by Peter De Jong	
The 1984 Reformed Ecumenical Synod	4
by G.J. Williamson	
The CRC in the Dominican Republic	6
by Neal Hegeman	
Timely Lessons from the Life of David	8
by Sandra Heynen	
Is America the Land of Hollow People?	9
by Simon Walburg	
1984: Where Do We Go From Here?	10
by Nelson D. Kloosterman	
But Where Are the Nine?	12
by John Blankespoor	
Christian Reformed Synod 1984: Where Are We?	13
by Harold VanMaanen	
The Doctrine of Last Things—The Resurrection	14
and the Rapture	
by Jerome M. Julien	
Prayer	16
by Henry Vander Kam	
Preaching from the Old Testament	19
by Donald Macleod	
Viewpoint: A Premise of Synod Infallibility?	22
by Cecil Tuininga	
Common Grace, Bane or Blessing?	23
by John H. Sietsema	
Don't Surrender to Relativism	23
by J. Tuininga	
Book Review: Marriage to a Difficult Man:	24
The "Uncommon Union" of Jonathan and Sarah Edwards	
by Elizabeth D. Dodds	

The 1984 Reformed Ecumenical Synod

G.I. Williamson

As delegates gathered for the 1984 RES meeting in Chicago it was generally recognized that the future of this organization was problematic. Despite faithful efforts by some member churches, it is our view that the future of the RES is still very much in doubt. We say this because the decisions taken in Chicago were not adequate to ensure the future of the RES as a viable Reformed movement. There were three main issues before this Synod. In this article we will discuss these, briefly, in the order in which the RES itself dealt with them. Then, in conclusion, we will offer our own assessment.

1. Constitution Revision

The Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (hereafter we will use the abbreviation GKN) had already made it known to the other RES Churches that they wanted a new constitution for the RES. Judging from the draft constitution circulated by them, prior to the Chicago meeting, they wanted to reduce the RES to little more than a forum for discussion with virtually no disciplinary power. It became obvious to everyone at the Chicago meeting that this issue had to be settled first, since there would be little point in making some of the other decisions if the character of the RES was basically altered. There were some—and we count ourselves in that number—who did not see any need whatever, at this time, for a comprehensive constitutional revision. We argued that the existing constitution has amply provided for any change that is really needed. Nevertheless, after lengthy debate, the RES finally decided to go along with the appointment of an international committee to revise the constitution. If this was all that could be said, one would have to conclude that the GKN, at this point, received quite unwarranted accommodation. But this is not all there is to say, because the RES also decided: 1) that the present basis, purpose, and qualifications for membership (Art. V, section 1) must be preserved in any revision, and 2) that any change from the present constitution will need a 2/3 vote for approval. It is therefore our judgment that this decision did not provide what the GKN was seeking. To the contrary, if the committee faithfully adheres to these decisions, there will be no sacrifice of the disciplinary powers of the RES.

2. Membership of the GKN

The second major issue was the question of the legitimacy of the membership of the GKN in the RES. Some churches (such as the Reformed Churches of New Zealand, of which I was a delegate) had requested some action to effect the exclusion of the GKN from the RES. The request was based on an accumulation of evidence from developments in the GKN, which make it self-evident that they are no longer faithful Reformed Churches. They have joined the WCC. They have admitted women to ruling and teaching offices in the Church, against express Scriptural prohibitions. (As a matter of fact, knowing full well that the RES as a whole has expressed opposition to admitting women to ruling and teaching offices in the Church, the GKN nevertheless sent two women as part of their 1984 RES delegation). The GKN have also failed to faithfully discipline those who teach false doctrine. And of course, most offensive of all, they have given a measure of approval to homosexual sin. Known practicing homosexuals are permitted to take the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, and to hold office in the GKN.

Much of the work of the RES is done in what are called pre-advisory committees. Our pre-advisory committee dealt with the issue of GKN membership in the RES. It soon became evident in this committee that we agreed on the factual data, but not on what to do with it. The result was that we ended up with two reports—majority and minority—which were identical up to the point where action was recommended. At this point our minority report asked the Synod to do two things. We will put it in our own words, as succinctly as possible. We asked the RES to: 1) request the GKN to withdraw its so-called pastoral advice on homosexual practice, or else 2) withdraw from the RES by December 31, 1986. We regret to say that this recommendation failed by one vote (the vote was 28-28, with one abstention). It is sad to note that this defeat could have been avoided if even one of the smaller Presbyterian churches, which withdrew after the 1980 Synod at Nimes, had remained in the RES until this Synod). So, the end result was a seriously flawed decision. It was to this effect: 1) to request the GKN to

“withdraw” its pastoral advice concerning homosexual practice, or 2) if it finds that it is unable to comply with this request, to “seriously consider (the fact) that several churches would find it difficult to stay in the RES with the GKN.”

Some appeared to be of the opinion that this decision— weakened as it was—was still strong enough that the GKN might decide to leave the RES anyway. But we very much doubt it. Such an act of honesty is not characteristic of the GKN of the present. If the GKN did withdraw it would offer some hope that the RES might survive as a viable Reformed organization. However, we must face the lamentable fact that the RES did not faithfully exercise the discipline which the situation demanded. For this reason, we see little hope that the RES can continue as a credible movement.

3. Race Relations

The third major issue at this RES meeting was the matter of Race Relations, and centered upon the alleged “moral and theological justification of apartheid” by the White South African Churches. Let it be plainly stated that we do not like the political system of South Africa. We fully agree with the large majority of Churches in the RES that the apartheid system has inflicted great injustice and suffering on the black people of that nation. We furthermore believe the RES has been correct to concern itself with this issue, and to express its strong disapproval. Yet we do not think this is all that needs to be said. It is our view, on the contrary, that it is right here that the RES—in the past—has done some of its finest work. Just because the RES has held in its membership so many of the Reformed denominations in South Africa, it has been able to work—as no other organization—to bring the power of the gospel to bear on this problem. Furthermore, it is our judgment that there has been significant progress. In talking with delegates from black and colored churches—both at the 1980 and 1984 meetings—we were told that there has been progress in the right direction. No one said there has been enough progress. But there has been progress. Yet in spite of these things, the GKN—strongly supported by the American CRC delegation—was determined to get the RES to make a hard-hitting decision. And this is what happened.

To put it in a nutshell: the RES declared the “theological defense of apartheid” to be heretical and a status confessionis” (“a concern about which it is impossible to differ without it effecting the integrity of our communal confession as Reformed Churches”). It is important to note that these terms did not originate in RES circles. The debate brought out the fact that they came out of the World Council of Churches and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches. Thus it was argued— cogently, we believe—that the RES would be wise not to use them. Rather, the plea was made, the RES ought to follow its own time-honored custom of appointing an international study committee. Then, after careful in-depth study, it could reach its own conclusions about the propriety of using such terms as ‘heretical’ and ‘status confessionis.’ If this had been done we are convinced that it still could (and should) have spoken clearly and sharply, in 1984, about the evils of apartheid. It did not need to borrow WCC/WARC terminology to do that. We also believe the White South African churches would have been able to bear this, and would have gone along with a decision to appoint a study committee (in fact they themselves argued for this). But as it is, we are very much in doubt that the White South African Churches will stay in the RES. And for our part we can quite understand their reaction. Surely no self-respecting Church

could accept lightly such terms as ‘heretical’—certainly not without a responsible effort to demonstrate that the charge is warranted.

Failure of the RES

What we see, then, is that the RES did not find itself able to exercise discipline where it was clearly demanded. After all, the RES already declared—1980—that all homosexual practice is sin. In the four intervening years the GKN has done nothing to reassure the other Churches. To the contrary, there has been further evidence to confirm the worst fears of other Churches. How sad, then, that in a matter so clearly calling for discipline the RES fell lamentably short. And how sad too, that in a matter much more complex— where there had been at least some movement in the right direction—the RES acted so unwisely, yes, even harshly. If the White South African Churches withdraw from the RES, and the GKN decides to remain in it, there is no way that we can see that it can service as a credible Reformed ecumenical movement.

We conclude with one further comment. The delegation of the Christian Reformed Church of North America was, to us, a great disappointment. How can it be that the abomination of a Church tolerating homosexual practice in its midst can be accommodated? And why the great desire for what we can only call “over-kill” when it comes to the White South African Churches? In our opinion the combination of these two decisions has probably sealed the fate of the RES. ●

Rev. G.I. Williamson, a delegate to the 1984 Reformed Evangelical Synod from the Reformed Churches of New Zealand, is currently pastor of an Orthodox Presbyterian Church at Carson, North Dakota.

for

Christmas

give

a gift subscription to

THE OUTLOOK

(Published since 1951)

1 YEAR (U.S.)

New subscription only \$ 6.50

1 YEAR (U.S.) Regular \$ 7.50

1 YEAR (Canada)

New subscription \$10.00

1 YEAR (Canada) Regular . \$11.50

One gift subscription from each
subscriber will double our circulation.

Let's try!

REFORMED FELLOWSHIP

4855 Starr St., S.E.
Grand Rapids, MI 49506

The Christian Reformed Church in the Dominican Republic

Neal Hegeman

The Christian Reformed Church in the Dominican Republic (ICR-RD) began with missionary contacts there in 1975 and 76 and since then has grown dramatically. Missionary involvement has increased from bi-annual visits in 1976 to the presence of 11 missionary families, 1 long-term volunteer and 1 short-term volunteer; church expansion and the increase of missionaries have gone hand in hand.

1. The Initial Visits (1976-80).

An illiterate lay pastor of an independent Haitian evangelical church near Sabana Grande De Boya, after listening to the Christian Reformed broadcast, *La Hora De La Reforma*, had his church secretary write a letter of invitation to the Christian Reformed Church. Arnold Rumph, Christian Reformed missionary in Puerto Rico, made the first visit in 1976. After that bi-annual visits were made until the fall of 1980.

The initial contacts were made among the Independent Pentecostal groups, of which, says Dario Platt in his book *Nueva Esperanza Para Santo Domingo*, there are more than 10,000 adherents. Some of the groups are affiliated with foreign mission boards, but the rest are not.

George Lockward in *Protestantism in the Dominican Republic* tells us that Protestantism came to the Dominican Republic during the Haitian invasion of it which lasted 22 years until 1844. Protestant groups came from Haiti and U.S. slaves from North America used Haiti as a spring-board to enter the Dominican Republic. After Independence came Protestantism grew. Pentecostalism entered during the 1930s and has tremendously increased during the last decade.

Dominican historians inform us that Haitians came to cut sugar cane during the early part of the 20th century. Even though Trujillo (the dictator) killed thousands of Haitians in 1937, the desperate need of the Haitians forced

them to cut sugar cane again. In 1976 there were an estimated 450,000 Haitians in the Dominican Republic.

The Haitians were mostly illiterate, especially because they had to work in an environment in which the people spoke Spanish while they spoke Creole. Many of them are illegal immigrants without proper documents, having come to the country illegally or having been denied the proper documents (such as birth certificates for children born in the country). Many are illegitimate; more than half of the Haitian marriages are common-law.

In this situation the Christian Reformed missionaries came to minister. Some preaching was done, visits were made, some used clothing and small amounts of money were given and some church organization took place. Not until May, 1981, were the groups officially organized.

The type of Haitians which drifted toward the Christian Reformed Church were those who were looking for help. Some were sincerely concerned for the welfare of the church and fellow human beings, but others were dressed-up evangelical crooks, who robbed the missionaries blind. It was through these imperfect contacts that the work was developed.

2. Second Phase: The Church is Organized and the World Mission Board is Established (1980-1982).

Ray Brinks and his wife, Gladys, were the first of our Board missionaries to arrive. He had had 21 years of experience in Argentina, and he and Gladys were hard-working, dedicated missionaries. His gift lay in church organization and hers in primary education. Ray showed genuine concern for the needs of the Haitian brothers and the Haitians spoke highly of him. He was generous in helping out with emergency needs and in looking for solutions to social problems. The second missionary family to arrive were the Hegemans. Neal applied himself to

leadership training, church organization and social work while Sandy helped Glayds in the primary schools.

The missionaries in their initial approach recognized lay leadership and did not require seminary education (considering that many leaders were illiterate or functionally illiterate). The method of training them was on an extension basis. The Christian Reformed missionaries had learned from the TEE literature of such people as Winter, Emery, Rowen and McKinney and from projects such as the Guatemalan Presbyterian Seminary, Jorge Patterson's work in Honduras, and our church's own CITE program that extension was a good alternative to seminary training. However, the leadership trainers, Hegeman, De Young, Martinez, Veeneman and Oostendorp, had to go one step further, and that was to incorporate non-formal education techniques in order to meet the multiple and complex educational needs of illiterate and functionally illiterate people. The work of Pablo Friere, although from a liberationist view, was incorporated methodologically in some of the literacy training. The literature on Oral Tradition and Black Worship and Christianity was also used to develop some of the leadership training.

Our missionaries used an open-door method. Taking the cue from the Church Growth research, that it is important to respond to responsive fields, they encouraged church planting. The missionaries did not do the church planting, but encouraged Haitians to seek contacts, start worship services, do evangelism and build the church.

The missionaries used a multi-ministerial approach, integrating both word and deed of the gospel. Such wholism is much closer to the Haitian and Third-World world-and-life views. Western societies feel more comfortable in categorizing and specializing. Such an open approach also helped the church to meet immediate needs and incorporate the services of other evangelical agencies.

By May, 1982, the ICR-RD had grown to 27 groups, of which 13 were organized as churches. However, the greatest growth came in the next year when the number of groups shot up to 67. By April, 1984, the number stood at 93.

3. Mission Consolidation and Continued Church Growth and Development (1983-84).

From the 2 missionary families in early 1982 the mission force grew to 11 families by the middle of 1983. Christian Reformed World Relief also came into the field with 4 families, with a director, literacy worker, nurse and agricultural workers. The World Mission doubled its team by sending the Martinezes, Veenemans and Oostendorps for leadership training.

The church continued to grow. Local church leaders were being trained and local churches have daughter-churches. Some additional independent groups affiliated, but the largest number of new groups were "campo blancos", new preaching points. All of the World Mission Board missionaries encouraged this movement. The World Relief people felt differently, however. At one point they even asked the missionaries not to encourage more church growth! They felt that they could not keep up with the diaconal needs. But, since the World Relief organization has since shifted its concerns to larger programs rather than local diaconal matters, it is not yet deeply involved in the ICR-RD.

The primary school education program continued to develop with the addition of Jeff and Kathy De Young to the mission staff. Covenant training, so lacking in the churches, would find its roots in the small schools.

Neal Hegeman developed a ministry center in which evangelical resources such as literacy-training, clinics and other programs were centralized in a region in order to benefit the maximum number of people. Other missionaries are planning ministry centers in their respective zones.

The number of groups, now over 90, continues to increase. Dominican works are being started and Dominican leadership is being raised up.

Conclusion

What is the *Relationship Between the Increase in the Number of Missionaries and the Development of the Church?*

1. Mission literature and theory speak about the "three-self-movement" — self-government, self-propagation and self-support. These are worthy goals, if they are possible. The question the missionaries confronted was: "Is it possible for economically marginal people to become self-sufficient?" The great failure of Pentecostalism in the Dominican Republic (failure, in the sense that so many church groups have been abandoned and that there are very few 2nd and 3rd generation churches) is connected with this question. In Pentecostalism, the local church had been made self-sufficient, and we have often seen them suffer because of it. Self-sufficiency is good up to a point. We are still, by the nature of the church, a catholic church, a body which goes beyond the local to the regional, to the national and to the international. Those relationships will somehow have to be well-defined and established in the "three-self formula". On the other hand, what we see developing in the Dominican Republic is an over-dependence on the missionaries. That problem needs to be overcome by training national leaders to take over their functions and improve on their own. Eventually the nationals must do their own training, even though some resources will come from better equipped churches.
2. Missionary influence will depend on what type of missionaries are sent. The Lord can use a sanctified person in any situation. A rebellious, reactionary and offensive Christian can do a lot of damage in the Lord's vineyard. The quality of missionaries sent to the field will seriously affect the quality of the work that will be done.
3. Missionary influence will depend on what mission the missionary is on. If the missionary comes just to help the poor help themselves, perhaps the deeper spiritual needs will be overlooked and neglected in pursuit of those material goals. If the missionary comes to help the nationals in all of their needs, balancing spiritual and material, a lot more long-term results may be anticipated.

Finally, in our overview of the ICR-RD developments we must recognize that it is the Holy Spirit who is at work. Christ will build His church. May He continue to use all of His people to do so, and may we be ready to participate in this important part of His work. ☉

Bibliography:

- Neal Hegeman, "A History of the Christian Reformed Church in the Dominican Republic", Santo Domingo, 1982
Neal Hegeman, "An Accurate Picture of the Christian Reformed Church in the Dominican Republic", Santo Domingo, 1982.

Timely Lessons FROM THE LIFE OF DAVID

Sandra Heynen

How easy it is to quote the familiar passage, II Tim. 3:15: "All scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness" (NASB). At the same time, how easy it is to neglect some portions of that profitable Word. Sometimes it is the most famous Bible episodes that are quite neglected as far as real study of them is concerned. The life of King David may be just such a case.

Perhaps no other Old Testament person is better known in a superficial way. Every child who has attended Sunday School has heard the exciting story of David and Goliath. And countless "historical novels" and Hollywood-style films have exploited the sordid sin of David with Bathsheba. Many people realize that David wrote a large number of the Psalms, including perhaps the most popular passage in the Bible, Psalm 23.

Yet too many Christians have overlooked in David's life and writings the essence of his greatness — his lifelong, all-encompassing commitment to, and dependence on Jehovah. He was "a man after God's own heart" (I Sam. 13:14). This was true, but not because he was sinless. He fell deeply into temptation. He was guilty of following some of the worldly customs of his day (polygamy). There were times when he acted impulsively from panic or passion. He experienced periods of discouragement and depression. Even though David loved his children deeply, he failed them in the important areas of example and discipline. Although David's life story had many dreary pages, throughout that dramatic life, one can detect a believer's heart-beat.

Look at the courageous youth, appalled by Goliath's disdainful insults of his Lord! The idealism and bravado of youth were incited to action by David's devotion to God. He knew the greatness, the power, the holiness of the God of Israel and would not stand by while a heathen voice defied and defiled "the name of the Lord Almighty" (I Sam. 17). Are young people today as willing and able to stand for the Lord if they must endure danger or ridicule to do so?

Look again, as David matures into a skillful warrior and becomes the object of hero worship, devoted friendship, and insane jealousy. (And remember, he has been anointed — he has a high calling.) Does all of this swell his head in the same manner that fame and position affected King Saul? No, instead David repeatedly displays a pervasive humility which issues from his spiritual condition. He is in close communion with God and sees his life and its purpose in relation to God's plan and Kingdom. He also sees his situation among men in the light of his position before God. Anyone with a clear vision of where he stands in relationship to God, and

in dependence upon Him, can be nothing but humble. That person may stumble, doubt, be hurt, even fear, in moments of weakness — and David did all of these. Yet the spiritual foundation of his life, though often tested and once nearly broken, remained intact. God's faithfulness preserved it time and again by way of David's humble trust in the Rock of his Salvation (See Matt. 5:3, Eph. 2:8).

Twentieth century man badly needs to learn this truth! As Peter urges in his first epistle (I Peter 5:5b-8): "Clothe yourselves with humility towards one another because God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore, under God's mighty hand, that He may lift you up in due time" (NIV).

David was perhaps the greatest type of Christ, and his quality of humility was one of his closest resemblances to that of the Son and Savior (Pil. 2:5-8). His humble spirit is revealed in his respect for Saul as God's anointed even when Saul's intense, hateful jealousy was making a shambles of David's life. It shows itself again as David patiently waits for God's timing to place him on the throne, shunning to force himself upon the people even when it seemed the logical course of action (II Sam. 3-5).

A striking example of David's humble attitude before God is brought out in II Samuel 6 and I Chronicles 13 and 15. At first David stumbles. He acts out of pure motives but with a careless disregard for the revealed word of God concerning how to carry the Ark of the Covenant. (Since the Ark symbolized God's Presence with His people, the way it was treated reflected one's attitude towards God.) Here David is clearly seen as a sinner saved by grace, a sinner, like every Christian, prone to worship God in his own impure, unacceptable way, rather than as God has prescribed. And yet, he is a saved sinner, who by God's grace sees his error, is sorry for his sin and willing to be corrected by God's Word. Thus he is enabled to offer acceptable worship to his Lord.

Even in the darkest chapter of David's life story (II Sam. 11 and 12), his ultimate godliness is confirmed. One is reminded of Paul's lament centuries later, in Romans 7:14-19: "... For what I do is not the good I want to do: no, the evil I do not want to do — this I keep on doing" (vs. 19). At that point the Christian wonders in horror, "How could David fall so low?", and confesses in sorrow, "How often my own heart reeks of foul depravity!" What is important in this tragedy — of overriding significance and immense comfort — is this: David repented, he confessed his sin, he humbly submitted to God's indictment. "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God," but —

There is a way out of that pit of condemnation. — “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness” (I Jn. 1:9), David showed that he was a redeemed soul by his repentance; he testified to God’s forgiveness in Psalm 32. Alas, his sin had devastating consequences in his earthly life, as all sins do; but his eternal security and his relationship with God were preserved through God’s grace and mercy.

His great desire to build a fitting House for the Lord, fulfilled by his son, Solomon, again indicates the motivating force of David’s life. He wanted his life to bring glory to God. He wanted his actions to be obedient to God’s will. His deepest desire was that his whole life would be a living sacrifice to God. This is the reason that his Psalms are such a comfort, inspiration and incentive to all believers. Only a man who loved God above all else could have written those words of petition, praise, and confession! As David beautifully summed it up in his last words (II Sam. 23:2 and 5): “The Spirit of the Lord spoke through me: His word was on my tongue. . . . Is not my house right with God? Has He not made with me an everlasting covenant. . . . Will He not bring to fruition my salvation and grant me my every desire?”

David has much to teach to the modern Christian. All Scripture is profitable. Like the noble Bereans of the first century A.D., let us receive it eagerly and examine it daily to know God’s truth. ●

Mrs. Heynen lives in Sioux Center, Iowa.

Is America the Land of the Hollow People?

By Simon Walburg

Are we in America, more and more, getting to be hollow men and women? By hollow, I mean void of true purpose — like a drum making much noise but empty.

Let’s see why this is, even though we live in an age of sky-rocketing technological advances.

Personally, as a published poet, every fiber in my soul protests the thought, the notion there is no God.

Hearing the sounds of a musical score by Bach or Beethoven; seeing the burgeoning of spring in its emerald elegance with chirruping robins in a chorus of hope; greeting new life in the miracle of birth; seeing the ebb-tide of a soul

about to span the stars in its flight to its Maker, — all these cry out from the deepest part of our heart, and we voice with the Psalmist: “The fool has said in his heart, there is no God.”

However, note that Friedrich Nietzsche, the German philosopher of the last century, gave atheism (the root of our troubles, as I see it) a boost when he described his madman running into the town square with his lantern looking under tables and benches, crying out, “Where is God? I can’t find God. God is dead and we have killed him.”

So now, according to this philosophy, we find ourselves in a purely materialistic universe. Angels and demons are laughed off stage and the spirits of men logically disappear with the concept of a dead God.

Hollow? Hopeless? Let us look at the further repercussions of a dead God philosophy.

It’s a foregone conclusion if there are no absolute standards of right and wrong, all feelings of guilt are soon obliterated — wiped out! We do as we please, turn our backs on life itself.

Consider this tragic story. Our nation laments the loss of 45,000 American combat soldiers in Vietnam, which was horror enough. Yet we show little emotion over nearly an equal amount of abortions in our state last year.

What has snapped in the American psyche that lets our citizens condone things done to unborn babies which they would not permit to be done to the family cat. Hollow men and women? You be the judge.

As I view it, the “God is dead” philosophy has permeated all of our culture.

We can readily see in the world of art the confusion of those who view the so-called masterpieces of the present generation. Many of us can’t understand the squiggles, slashes of color, the strange formations that comprise modern art.

We see a canvas on which is painted a leg sticking up, a dangling foot, an arm in a corner. Then, staring at us is a solitary eye. You wonder if the picture has been hung upside down.

Or again, study the lack of meaning in the realm of much of today’s rock music, a cacophony of unbearable, strident sounds with ear-deafening decibels. This loud-twang music doesn’t make sense.

This, of course, is only part of the story, part of the many things that tell us we live in an age of hopelessness.

Did you know the No. 1 killer on our college campuses is suicide? In fact, atheism is the death of hope and leads to a withering of the soul. And if you want to see the ultimate results of this “Godless” philosophy observe the ghoulish Karl Marx regimes of Russia, China, etc.

In the words of one writer: “What can be more foolish than to think that all this rare fabric of heaven and earth could come by chance, when all the skill of art is not able to make an oyster?”

So what is the answer to this dilemma? My personal experience and conviction is that Christianity reverses all these negative trends. Christianity gives meaning to life, the ground for reason and provides the removal of guilt, through the death of Jesus Christ, and the free offer of His Salvation.

So, hollow, hopeless citizens, there is hope for you and me if we look to the cross of Calvary. ●

Reprinted with permission from the December 10, 1983 Grand Rapids Press. Mr. Walburg is a free lance writer living in Grand Rapids.

1984: Where Do We Go From Here?

Nelson D. Kloosterman

More than seven hundred fifty people filled the sanctuary of the Bethel Christian Reformed Church of Sioux Center, Iowa, on Friday evening, September 14, 1984, for a meeting sponsored by the area chapter of the Reformed Fellowship. Featured as speaker was the Rev. Henry Vander Kam, professor-emeritus of Mid-America Reformed Seminary.

The subject of his address was: "Synod's decision concerning women deacons, and what can be done about it."

Rev. Vander Kam indicated that the issue was given birth among us through our involvement in the RES, rather than through the use of ecclesiastical channels, that is, by a case being brought from a consistory through a classis to a synod. The RES had been spurred by the Dutch Gereformeerde Kerken (synodical) to study the matter. Among the Christian Reformed, the framework for the fifteen-year-long discussion has been two study reports, Report 44 of the synod of 1972, and Report 44 of the synod of 1973. Vander Kam faulted the former for its vagueness and ambiguity, in view of the fact that "both sides" can find justification in the report for their opposing views on the nature of biblical authority. The Report 44 of 1973, Vander Kam contended, reduces ordination to mere appointment, and office to mere service.

The speaker gave a brief sketch of the discussion of women in ecclesiastical office within the CRC in terms of the mandates, reports and conclusions of the various study committees which have come to synods during the past fifteen years. He observed that while the reports themselves often contained sound exegesis, the committees just as often took "leaps" from their reports to their recommendations; their conclusions were not justified by the exegesis.

The decision of 1984 represents a new development in the discussion of women in office. In opening the office of deacon to women, the denomination has now officially employed the new hermeneutic. Moreover, using the conclusions also of 1973 concerning office (service) and

ordination (appointment), this decision is a virtual declaration, by necessary inference, that "deacons have no authority." This inference is reinforced by the qualification that women may be "deacons-whose-work-is-distinguished-from-that-of-elders". Vander Kam insisted that the church up 'til now has seen the diaconal office as possessing authority — a different kind of authority, to be sure, but one that is derived from Christ Himself. This authority must be exercised, for example, to prevent poverty (see Form for the Ordination of Elders and Deacons). Equally distressing is that the 1984 decision officially introduces congregationalism into the structure and government of the churches in the denomination.

But now the question: what can we do? Where do we go from here? Warning on the one hand against doing anything rash, and on the other hand against being fainthearted and doing nothing, Vander Kam outlined a course of action comprised of the following five steps:

1. Ask your consistory to make clear that no list of nominations for office will include the names of women, either this coming fall or in the future.
2. Ask your consistory to bring an overture to its classis and to the synod of 1985, to rescind the decision of 1984 regarding women in the office of deacon. Although many may believe this to be a futile effort, we are yet duty bound to do it — once more. Until now, appeals and overtures have protested movements, trends, and recommendations; now we must protest *an official action*.
3. Do not pay quotas to support — that is — teach, defend or implement this decision of the 1984 synod. Involved here is a corporate responsibility in supporting wrongdoing; as a matter of conscience, we may not support it. Three denominational causes mentioned in this connection were Calvin College and Seminary,

World Missions and Home Missions. Regarding the college and seminary, Vander Kam observed that the majority of the college religion professors and of the seminary faculty has openly defended this decision; moreover, the women students at Calvin Seminary who are studying for the Master of Divinity degree are not studying to be deacons. Concerning World Missions, Vander Kam reported that the area secretary to the Far East wondered aloud (in working with the study committee reporting in 1981) what all the fuss was about — "We've had women in office on the mission field for years." A secret well-kept from the church, said Vander Kam. Further, several home mission churches, under the supervision of the Home Mission Board, have already had women serving in official capacities for some time. Vander Kam advised that these withheld funds not be put in escrow, but given instead to causes that have earned our trust by uncompromised allegiance to Scripture, and that need our support.

4. We must await the decision of the 1985 synod. If we are not satisfied with that decision, we may have to call a convention to continue the Christian Reformed Church. This matter of historical continuity is of great importance, to proclaim and hold before men that it is those who have gone against the teachings of Scripture who have departed from the Christian Reformed Church, not we who seek to uphold those teachings. The time for fence-straddling — always an uncomfortable position anyway — is past.
5. We must be much in prayer. Because we are called by God to follow these steps for the sake of the church, we may not act rashly, nor be fainthearted in waiting to see potential outcomes of the decision in the life of the church.

The address of Rev. Vander Kam was followed by a question and answer period. Questions ranged from asking clarification about how quotas could be withheld, to seeking elaboration on how consistories can hold before prospective nominees the urgency of remaining on nomination for office. Several questions sought explanation of the arguments used by those favoring women in office; the biblical evidence and synodical justification. Vander Kam pointed out that a negative ground ("the biblical teaching is ambiguous, and does not forbid women in office") is, like the argument from silence, always dangerous. Others pointed out that we now have two kinds of deacons, male deacons who are full members of the consistory, and female deacons who are restricted members of the consistory.

The third and final part of the meeting was an opportunity for the audience to express itself about the synodical decision. Listeners were invited to indicate their views by circling one, two, or all of the following resolutions:

1. At a mass meeting of the Reformed Fellowship of Northwest Iowa held September 14 in Sioux Center, it was resolved that the Christian Reformed constituency should know that this section of the Reformed Fellowship is opposed to the decision of Synod to permit women to serve as deacons in the Christian Reformed Church.
2. At a mass meeting . . . it was resolved that we have conscientious objections to the decision of Synod to permit women to serve as deacons in our church. Therefore we cannot support financially such institutions as

Calvin College and Seminary and other institutions that promote and carry out this decision of Synod.

3. Since Synod has violated the creeds — the Church Order, the Belgic Confession (Articles 29, 30, 32) and the Word of God (Acts 6) — in permitting women to serve as deacons, we therefore believe that this decision of Synod is not settled and binding for our church and its members. We wish to warn our denomination that this unscriptural decision will not only destroy the unity of the church but also hasten its apostasy."

Approximately six hundred fifty ballots were distributed to the audience. The first resolution received the endorsement of four hundred thirty-three, the second was endorsed by three hundred ninety-three, and the third was favored by four hundred twenty-four.

A concluding observation: one heartening fact was the attendance of a considerable number of young people (college-age men and women) and young married couples.

A final, concluding observation: our public and hearty thanks to the Consistory of the Bethel Christian Reformed Church of Sioux Center, Iowa, for their gracious willingness to host this meeting of the Reformed Fellowship. ●

Rev. Nelson D. Kloosterman is a professor at the Mid-America Reformed Seminary in Orange City, Iowa.

Rev. H. Vander Kam will speak at a similar evening meeting on this general theme at the North Street church of Zeeland on Nov. 8 and at the East Cutlerville church on Nov. 9.

STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP MANAGEMENT AND CIRCULATION

(Act of October 23, 1962, Title 39,
United States code).

Filing Date: September 9, 1983

THE OUTLOOK
(formerly Torch and Trumpet)

Published monthly at 4855 Starr St., S.E.
Grand Rapids, Michigan 40506

The name of the publisher is Reformed Fellowship. The name of the Editor and Managing Editor is Rev. Peter De Jong, 4985 Sequoia, S.E., Grand Rapids, MI 49508. The owner is the Reformed Fellowship, Inc., 4855 Starr, S.E., Grand Rapids, MI 49506. Known bondholders, mortgages or other security holders owning one percent or more of the total amount of bonds, mortgages or other securities are: None.

Total number copies printed (net Press run) preceding 12 months 4700, last issue, 4600. Sales through carriers, dealers, etc.: none. Mail subscription average 4200, last issue 4100. Free distribution by mail averages 200, last issue, 200. Copies distributed to news agents: none. Office left over average 300, last issue 300. Total number distributed average 4400, last issue 4300.

I certify that the statements made by me are correct and complete.

MARY KAISER, Business Mgr.

But Where Are the NINE?

John Blankespoor

Jesus asked, "Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?" Then he said to him, "Rise and go, your faith has made you well" (Luke 17:11-19).

"Where are the nine?" This question has echoed throughout the ages and confronts us today.

The account of the miracle is given in a few words. Ten lepers came to Jesus, and from a distance called out with a loud voice, "Jesus, Master, have pity on us." Leprosy was and still is a most dreaded disease.

In some way it can be compared with modern-day cancer. The victims usually experienced that their bodies literally rotted away, limb by limb. A leper experienced a living death. The victims felt their helplessness to find a cure. The disease was a picture of the helplessness of the enslaved sinner. Those who were afflicted were separated from society, friends and relatives. There might be no physical contact. Imagine what this meant for spouses, parents, children, and other relatives. If in some miraculous way one was healed, he had to be examined by the priest before he might return to normal life and society. Here are ten such people. Keeping their distance, they call out loudly to Jesus for help. Curtly Jesus answers them that they should go to the priest to be examined. The implication is that they would be healed. A great miracle would take place. This also happened. We would naturally expect that each one of them would be greatly moved by the miracle each had experienced. Surely they knew that they were healed by someone much greater than themselves. Only one of them, a foreigner, a Samaritan, returned to Jesus to express his gratitude. He fell at the Lord's feet and thanked Him profusely. Then Jesus said, "But where are the other nine?"

This history, applicable at all times, is especially appropriate at this time of the year, the thanksgiving season. Although in the parable we have to do with a healing, while on Thanksgiving Day we have to do with material gifts, this healing was also something physical. We cannot really separate or divide the physical from the spiritual in the life of the Christian, for all things are spiritual for the Christian, as a new creation in Christ.

We have again received an abundance of material gifts from the Lord in the past season. In general, economic conditions have improved for all of us. We have been showered with material blessings. We have so much that we have no idea what it means to have only bare needs. Did you ever wonder how we would react if the Lord would give us only

what we pray for when we pray for daily bread? We may enjoy a higher standard of living than anybody has ever before enjoyed in the history of the world, and generally higher than all other people in the world today. We can't even imagine going to bed hungry as do millions every day. The big question however is, "How do we respond to our wealth?" After the healing only one (10%) returned to express heartfelt gratitude. The other nine (90%) apparently didn't feel this at all. Surely they must have been extremely happy because of the healing, but happy only with and for themselves. Is this also the percentage (10%) of truly thankful people on Thanksgiving Day? Surely the percentage is higher than that, we would think. The teaching of the Lord here is that the percentage which reveals true thanksgiving is very small.

What kind of people form this ten percent minority? How do they show their faith and gratitude in daily life and during the thanksgiving season? First of all, they are people who know themselves to be sinners, unworthy of any of these good gifts. Jesus Christ is their only hope. They are also people who recognize that all that they receive come from the Lord, a crop for the farmer, a pay check for the working man, social security checks for the retired, financial returns for the businessman, or whatever they receive. They see that these gifts are given by their heavenly Father who has again been gracious to them. In response they are heartily thankful, first giving themselves to the Lord (2 Cor. 8:5). This gratitude they express in song, prayer, gifts of money and godly living. Thus they show their thankfulness, as the foreigner (Samaritan) also did. We further ask, what is meant by the ingratitude of the nine, the 90%? Who are those people? Where are they? Are they also church members? Probably the other nine lepers were Jews because Jesus specifically mentions that the one who was thankful was a foreigner. Proceeding from this conclusion, we may assume that the 90% are like nominal Christians, people who belong to a church. They profess to believe in God and may even formally acknowledge that all good things come from above, but in their hearts they do not know the Lord. They are not really touched by what the Lord has given them in the past season. They may resemble the Israelites in the wilderness, complaining and murmuring about what they have received, or what they did not receive. Many of them make gods of their stomachs, and all of them make gods of the mammon of the world. That's how they *live*. Although they may observe Thanksgiving Day and appear to be thankful for the

good they enjoy, their thanksgiving is for self. "Self" is the center of their lives and they are happy and thankful for themselves. Responsive love and giving one's self in gratitude, they do not know. Although on Thanksgiving Day they may attend a church service, their real thanksgiving is the big dinner, watching football games and social gatherings for enjoyment of self.

Jesus said to the one who did return, "Rise and go, your faith has made you well." Does this imply that the nine who did not return to give thanks did not have this faith and that the 90% of today don't have it either? The simple answer is, Yes. This man had faith in his heart, although that faith may not have had the knowledge that we, with fuller revelation, have. Through this faith he was made well. This faith also made him return to express his heartfelt gratitude. This faith we all need, in order to be thankful from the heart. In this faith we know that we are sinners, trust only in the mercies of Christ for forgiveness and life, and gratefully love Him. But aren't true Christians often also like the nine lepers? Doesn't the question, "But where are the nine" also apply to us? It surely does. Because of our sinful nature we often act like these nine healed lepers, unthankful to God for the abundance of gifts He gives us. This we also realize on Thanksgiving Day. Our faith moves us to pray for forgiveness because of our shameful lack of gratitude and to pray for the Holy Spirit to enable us to be more thankful, thus may we, like the one thankful healed leper, learn to say, "Thank you, Lord, for the showers of blessings our heavenly Fathers daily gives us. Father, give us more of this faith!"

The CR Synod of 1984: Where Are We?

Harold VanMaanen

I want to preface my remarks about the decisions of Synod 1984 in regard to the women's issue with two observations:

The first observation is that the issue is not liberal versus conservative and the second is not against women and the use of their gifts and talents. The real issue is, *What Does the Bible Say?* What has been the Biblical interpretation of scripture by our forefathers for the past 127 years?

Let me also say that the Headship Committee, on which I served, made up of eight ministers and seven elders, was very open and cordial. We respected one another's opinion even though we totally disagreed on the headship principle and the role of women in the church. I am still very much concerned why eight ministers and four elders signed the majority report, especially in light of the fact that the final vote to allow women to be deacons, in a limited role, passed by such a close vote: 82 yes — 75 no.

Now, let's take another look at what Synod decided on this whole issue. First, Synod adopted the minority report recommendation which said, "that Synod declare that the headship principle, which means that the man should exer-

cise primary leadership and direction setting in the home and in the church, is a Biblical teaching recognized in both the Old and New Testament." Adopted: 81 yes — 76 no.

The very next day Synod adopted a recommendation of the majority report which said, "That Synod declare there is insufficient scriptural evidence to warrant the conclusion that a headship principle holding man's rulership/primary leadership and direction setting over woman is a creation norm extending over the whole of human life." Adopted by voice vote.

It is very clear to me that we now have two decisions by Synod, on record, that are contradictory as to the scriptural teaching in regard to the headship principle.

Synod also adopted the following majority report recommendations:

- 1) Allow consistories to ordain qualified women to the office of deacon.
- 2) The work of women as deacons is to be distinguished from that of elders.
- 3) The decision as to whether women should be ordained as deacons in any specific congregation be left to the judgment of the local consistory.
- 4) That pastors are not expected to participate in the ordination of women if it is against their consciences.

With the adoption of these recommendations, I can see some real problems which could develop within a particular church and/or classis. Time and space do not permit me to discuss all of the potential problems that exist.

I do want to comment on how I feel Synod treated women and the office of deacon. We could now have a double standard for the office of deacon, where the consistory meets as a general consistory, which includes all members. In this situation the male deacons would be able to help make general governing decisions of the church, but the female deacons would be excluded.

Synod also refused to recognize that women do possess many gifts and talents which can be used in the church. I refer you to the Minority Report I, which clearly states how women could and should function in the church according to scripture and church order. Perhaps the decisions Synod did and did not make in regard to women in the church, are just a beginning and are intended to lead to further actions in future years.

What must we do if we disagree with the decisions of Synod of '84? There have been a number of options proposed, such as, "split" the denomination, withhold denominational quotas, etc. I believe this is a matter of much prayer and we need God's guidance in this revolutionary change in His church. I believe that those of us who are truly convinced as to what the Bible teaches in regard to the headship principle and how it relates to women in office, must unite our efforts and appeal to Synod of '85 to reconsider the actions taken by Synod of '84. This must be the first step and if that fails, then unitedly we may want to take some other course of action.

In conclusion, I want to reiterate that the issue is not for or against women in the church, but the real issue is, "What does the Lord say?" Continue in prayer that the Lord's will may be done and that we may *all* be led by the Holy Spirit to do the will of God in this crucial and emotional problem. ●

Mr. Harold VanMaanen, who lives at RR #5, Oskaloosa, Iowa, is a state representative for Mahaska county and portions of Veokuk and Wapello counties.

The Doctrine of Last Things

THE RESURRECTION AND THE RAPTURE

Jerome M. Julien

Victory! That's what the return of the Lord Jesus Christ will herald! Victory over sin and Satan. Victory over death. With Christ's return comes the resurrection — victory over death realized.

In Scripture we read,

Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed (I Cor. 15:51,52).

Also,

For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven, with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then, we that are alive, that are left, shall together with them be caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord (I Thess. 4:16,17).

The term "resurrection" is a Biblical one. However, it is used in Scripture in different ways. This is clearly seen in John 5:19-29. In verses 21 and 25 the resurrection is synonymous with regeneration (of. Eph. 5:14; Col. 3:1). But this passage also refers to the resurrection in the Last Day (vv. 28, 29). *All* will come forth at that appointed hour. Calvin wrote:

But why does he mention those only who are shut up in graves, as if others would not be partakers of the resurrection, whether they have been drowned, or devoured by wild beasts, or reduced to ashes? The answer is, that as the dead are commonly buried, by the figure of speech called *synecdoche*, he employs a part to denote all who are already dead (*Commentary*, John 5:28).

Even a surface reading of John 5 will not allow more than one resurrection. John 5:29 simply states that both the elect and the reprobate will come forth — all of them — and they will have different experiences. Acts 24:14 and 15 states that there will be *one* resurrection (the word is singular) and all will participate.

Further, this resurrection is clearly related to the Last Day. Jesus said, "And this is the will of him that sent me, that of all that which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day (John 6:39; cf. 6:40, 44, 54; I Cor. 15:23; Phil. 3:20, 21; I Thess. 4:16)."

The resurrection in the Last Day will have two different visible results.

Although the resurrection of the unrighteous is not heavily emphasized in Scripture some very important things are said. For them, the resurrection will be an ushering into the utterly complete horror of the results of sin. Not only do the souls experience this; so also do the bodies — and that everlastingly. Death in its widest extent and heaviness is imposed on them.

Now, why can this be said?

Daniel 12:2 reads: "And many of them that sleep in the

dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." The word "many" ought not to disturb us. It actually emphasizes that the salvation which comes at that day "will not be limited to those who were alive but will extend also to those who had lost their lives (E.J. Young, *Daniel*, p. 256)." Some of these who have died shall arise to reproach or contempt, due to their sin.

In Isaiah 66:24 we are told that the unrighteous who arise "shall be an abhorring unto all flesh." There will be nothing beautiful, nor can there be, about these bodies. E.J. Young, writing on the text in his commentary put it this way: "The result is that it is an abhorrence to *all flesh* that beholds it." The sight of these bodies will remind us of the terrible punishment for sin.

On the other hand, although the Bible does not give us the exact nature of the believer's resurrection body, either, there are some hints which give us enough of a picture so that we see it as showing the full experience of sanctification and glory (Dan. 12:3; I Cor. 15:49; Phil. 3:21; I John 3:2).

Perhaps the closest to an explanation of the nature of the resurrection body is found in I Corinthians 15:42-44. This explanation is given as a contrast to the body that is buried.

The first characteristic is that whereas the body is "sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption." Our bodies constantly have in them the seeds of disease and death. Someone wrote, "When we begin to live we also begin to die." The corruption our bodies know continues even in the grave. But the resurrection body will be without corruption. It will be free from decay and disease.

I Corinthians 15 continues: "it is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory." We live and die lacking glory. When death comes the body must be put away in the grave or anyone who would look upon it would gasp in horror. Even the lowering of the body into a grave is a great dishonor. But our resurrection bodies will be like the glorious body of God's Son (Phil. 3:21). This, we are unable to describe; it is so wonderful!

"It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power." Death comes and all strength is gone. There is nothing more powerless than a corpse. Even strength for breathing is gone (Ps. 90:10). With the resurrection, however, comes a power which is ability to do everything which will be required in eternity. There will be no weak knees, no dim eyes or halting breath. Anything which would hinder us from serving the Lord will be done.

"It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body." Careful reading of these words will not allow us to see a comparison between a physical body and spirit. Rather, the comparison is between two kinds of physical bodies. The body that dies is "natural," "carnal," "animal." Our pre-

sent bodies, the ones placed in the ground at death, are governed by the seat of our sensations, affections, desires, etc. These are all polluted by sin. This natural body is placed in the ground. The body that is raised will be guided by a different set of impulses. A complete transformation will have taken place and the spiritual impulses will have taken over. However, it will not be some kind of spirit-being which will come forth. Jesus' body was physical (John 20:17; Luke 24:38-43). Ours will be like His.

Concerning this resurrection body, there are several points which must be emphasized. 1) The resurrection body will be of the whole person. The body will come forth from its resting place and will be reunited with the soul. 2) This resurrection will not be a new creation. Just as Christ did not have a new body, but a completely changed, yet essentially the same one in which He dwelt here, so will we. 3) In the resurrection we will remain man — rational, moral creatures. 4) In the resurrection we will maintain individuality, distinct from others. 5) However, the resurrection body will not be just a restoration of our present body. Though it will be recognizable, a transformation will have taken place.

Obviously, the resurrection is something about which we know very little. God has revealed only so much! As a result, many unanswerable questions arise, such as "At what age will the resurrected be?" Such questions are not only unanswerable, they are time-wasters.

Also, we must avoid painting a very silly picture of the resurrection which has all the parts of our bodies returning from hither and yon. Not only would that mean that limbs lost in the wars would have to travel through the air, but also returning would be all the teeth that have ever been extracted by our friendly dentists or that have fallen out due to growth, the hair which has been cut off, the finger-nails which have been clipped, and even the tonsils and appendices which have been removed due to disease. To think of all these flying, as it were, through the air is a silly picture to say the least! Yet, no doubt, you have heard the resurrection so described!

Rather, when we consider the resurrection we must read carefully I Corinthians 15:35-38:

But some one will say, How are the dead raised? and with what manner of body do they come? Thou foolish one, that which thou thyself sowest is not quickened except it die: and that which thou sowest, thou sowest not the body that shall be, but a bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other kind; but God giveth it a body even as it pleased him, and to each seed a body of its own.

Here Paul is using an illustration of a seed to convey the truth of the resurrection. In the spring many of us plant seeds. For a moment imagine that you have never seen a lush, green cornfield or a bed full of beautiful marigolds. If someone gave you a corn seed or a marigold seed and told you to plant it in the ground and then, you are told, a plant would come forth, what would you expect to see? Actually, that seed must dissolve so that the germ in it must come forth. It must disappear and never again be seen in its original state. But what comes forth is a richer and different form of life which nevertheless still has a relationship with that from which it sprouts. There is a continuity between seed and plant.

So it is in the resurrection. The seed, or the kernel of the body has been preserved. To that seed a glorified body is given in the resurrection.

Indeed, eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither has entered into the heart of man what God has prepared for His children!

Only the barest essentials have been given, and we can testify, "I believe . . . the resurrection of the body."

Closely connected with the resurrection is the subject of the rapture.

We must be very careful when we talk about the rapture. Dispensationalists spend so much time on the rapture that, while they would deny this, for them it appears as if the rapture is more important than the appearance of Christ. John F. Walvoord, in his *The Rapture Question*, p. 8, wrote that ". . . it is a most important aspect of the hope of the church." It becomes for many of them an escape. For that they are longing. Hal Lindsey has thrown fuel on the flame of interest in the rapture in a recent book with that title.

Now, while we shun the "rapture theology," we cannot shun the idea. Though the word "rapture" is not used in Scripture, the idea is there. While a case can be made that it is implied in I Corinthians 15:51-53, it is rather clearly stated in I Thessalonians 4:13-18.

The word itself comes from the Latin word meaning "to seize" or "to snatch." The idea of "caught up" in I Thessalonians 4:17 is the idea of "rapture." In fact, the Latin word is used at that point in the Latin New Testament.

What, actually, does the Bible teach about what is called "the rapture"?

First, according to I Thessalonians 4:16, 17, it is clearly related to the general resurrection of the Last Day. The fact that unbelievers are not mentioned in this passage does not mean that they will arise at another time, as some say. Actually, Paul, by inspiration, is giving comfort to confused believers who were afraid that if a believer died he would be something of a second-class citizen when Christ appeared and would not share the joy of the living believers. He was saying that *both* dead and living will know the joy of Christ's return. The dead bodies will come forth from their resting places. Their souls "will God bring with him" (v. 14). Jesus will be coming *for* those saints whose bodies and souls have been reunited, and for the saints yet living. Together, these shall be caught up to meet the Lord.

The idea of meeting the Lord should be explained. "To meet" in the Greek was a technical term which would describe a public welcome given to a visiting dignitary. The citizens would go out to meet him and then accompany him back to the city. They would not remain out of town with him. Nor does the church go to meet the Lord when He comes and remain with Him in the air for a period of three and one half, or seven years, as some teach. The idea of the rapture in the text is the grand welcome the church gives to the Lord. That relationship of joy will last forever (I Thess. 4:17). This is the second point which must be made.

Third, the rapture will not be silent (I Thess. 4:16; I Cor. 15:52), nor will it be secret (II Pet. 3:10). It is the *Day of the Lord* that comes as a thief — when least expected, *not* the rapture.

Fourth, it will be directly related to the transformation promised to believers. The living saints will be transfigured. What, then, of the unbeliever? He will witness the joy of the believers and he will be forced to acknowledge the Lord, but not in faith (Rom. 14:11; Phil. 2:9-11). He will see the reigning Savior and Judge, and seek a hiding place (Rev. 1:7; 6:15-17).

That last moment of history when the trumpet sounds and the shout "Behold, a white horse (Rev. 19:11)" echoes through all creation will be a glorious moment for the believer. Christ will have come *unto salvation* (Heb. 9:28). ●

Prayer

Private Prayers

Henry Vander Kam

Lesson 5 Psalm 62:8, I Thess. 5:17, Matt. 6:6

In any study of the subject of the believers' prayers we must distinguish private from public prayers. Sometimes the difference between the two is not sufficiently recognized. If we do not give adequate attention to the difference between these two forms of prayer, we can make some serious mistakes on our theology of prayer. The private, personal prayers of the individual are well-known to every believer because he simply would not be a believer if he did not pray. Here we do not encounter the difficulties which many people have in regard to public prayer. Many find it difficult to pray when other people are listening but find it very easy and natural to have the proper communion with their God in their own private devotions.

Examples of Private Prayer

The Bible speaks more often of public prayers than of private personal prayers. This should not surprise us. The personal prayers are not public and therefore do not come to light the way the others do. Although the word "to pray" is used most often of public prayers in the Scriptures, those Scriptures contain more material on our private, personal prayers than we often assume. It is, of course, difficult to find examples of private prayer although the Psalms offer some. Recalling his past experiences, David often shows us the type of prayer he prayed to his God while he was in distress. He even does that concerning the confession of his sins, AFTER he has experienced the forgiveness of God! The Psalms referred to in a previous lesson, such as Psalms 32, 51, and 130 give us examples of the way in which he was led to make confession and even give us the content of that confession. He had found forgiveness — now let all his fellow-believers experience with him the way to the acceptance of the penitent by the God of mercy and justice.

A Heart's Outpouring

There is a difference between confessions of sin which are appropriate in private and public prayers. Although in our public prayers we also ask for the forgiveness of our sins, we cannot deal as specifically with sins as we must do in our private prayers. Then we are to mention the sins by name. Then we are "to pour out our hearts" says the Psalmist in Psalm 62:8. What is contained in the phrase "pour out your heart before Him"? In the first place it must be seen in the context of this particular Psalm. The Psalmist has experienced various difficulties. There was always the danger that he would indeed be moved from his place, that he would fall. But, God is faithful and able to give complete salvation

regardless of his difficulties. He has entrusted himself into the hands of this God. He now counsels all the people to do the same thing. Let them pour out their heart to Him. They must consider that their persecutors must be properly weighed and they will then discover that these "opponents" are lighter than air! There is no substance to them. God's people often become afraid of those who certainly cannot do them harm because they are no match for the mighty One of Jacob!

To pour out our hearts also means that we keep nothing back. We entrust ourselves and all that is in our hearts to the living God. In the final analysis, there are very few before whom we are able to pour out our hearts. Husband and wife can do this. David and Johnathan could do this. Yet, how few are they whom we would entrust with the deepest needs and secrets of our hearts? Feel free, says the Psalmist, to pour out your heart to your God! This is characteristically a very private prayer. We do not pour out our hearts to everyone nor do we do it in public. This is a very intimate act. What a blessing it is for God's people to have Someone to whom they may go in this way! What a safety valve this is for them. They are then never alone. They are not on their own either. I belong to Him and can therefore pour out my heart to Him.

In Private

Jesus also speaks of our private prayer just before He teaches the Lord's Prayer to His disciples. There was a great temptation in that day, exemplified by the Pharisees, to make a great "show" of prayers. They would stand on street corners — the busier the place the better — to show men how pious they were! Don't you do that, says Jesus. When you pray, go into your inner chamber, shut the door, and your father who sees in secret will reward you. He will hear you. That is the proper place for our private, personal prayers. True prayer is a very private matter and is not intended for the eyes and ears of others. It is intended only for the ears of God. In it we can indeed "pour out our hearts." This is the kind of a place we need for that spiritual communion which the believing soul craves. The believer must have fellowship with his God. Here, in true prayer, in the deepest devotion, he finds the rest which he seeks.

This private prayer is not only for the purpose of making true confession of our sins, though this is a very important item, but it is also for the purpose of intercession in a way that is not always proper in public prayers. When we come to our God alone we mention each member of the family.

We can there not only pray for God's blessing on each one, but we can go into detail. We can also plead with our God on His covenant promises in these private prayers. How can we single out one of the children at the dinner table and ask for a very special measure of His grace to turn this child to the only true God? The subject might be humiliated if this were done in public. Christ spent long periods of time in prayer alone. He prayed for His disciples. Before He chose the twelve, He spent an entire night in prayer. Although we can only guess, do you think we would miss the mark very far if we concluded that a large part of that night's prayer was devoted to Judas? Must He take the enemy right into His own camp? The answer is: yes! But, why Father? Nevertheless, Thy will be done!

This private prayer is very important for the healthy spiritual life of God's people. After all, they have to live on that communion with Him. The line which binds them to their God must never be broken. The prayer-life of the individual believer determines his spiritual welfare. You have not because you ask not, says James. Is it even too much to require you to ask for what you need? The soul which is spiritually alive will naturally gravitate toward the Source of his spiritual life and to the One from Whom all good comes. Private, personal prayer is, therefore, the most natural thing in the world for the child of God.

“Without Ceasing”

In I Thessalonians 5:17 the Apostle urges the church of Thessalonica to “pray without ceasing.” This command comes in the midst of several which he gives to the church as he is coming to the close of this letter. There is much that he has to teach them, but there is no time. He has been in this church for only a very brief period of time and later writes two small epistles to this church. He is very abrupt in his writing in the last chapter of this epistle. Each one of the brief commands he gives contains a world of thought. Let these believers think upon these things in the days to come. Paul is not able to elaborate on any one of these principles now — he just states them.

When he tells them to pray “without ceasing” we must remember that he is here speaking of private prayers. He is speaking of informal prayers. This must be understood clearly or we come to a real misunderstanding of the text. If we are to pray without ceasing and these would be the public, formal prayers, we would go contrary to the teaching of the Scriptures in many places. To put it bluntly: there is more to do in this life than pray! We must always keep the work to which we are called and our individual prayer life in proper balance.

When so understood this becomes a maxim which we naturally follow. The true believer prays *while* he works. He prays all the time. His whole life is a prayer. Then praying without ceasing no longer sounds strange. How many prayers does not the believer utter before his God every day? He lives with his God as he is not able to live with any human being. He lives in constant communion with his God. That communion requires his constant prayer. That communion also requires that he knows the word which his God has spoken to him.

About private, personal prayer we do not feel embarrassed. One does not have to be fluent of speech to pray properly this private prayer before his God. It is necessary for the soul-life of every believer and *no one is able to do it for you!* This kind of prayer we have to learn. It is learned only in the school of God's word. There we find what is necessary

for us and we also learn what is acceptable to Him. When Christ taught His disciples, and therewith also us, to pray, He did not teach them a prayer to repeat, first of all, but how to come into the presence of the living God and there pour out our hearts!

If the prayer-life of a believer is healthy, his spiritual life will prosper, and if it is not healthy, his spiritual life finally withers and dies. But, how can we tell if it is healthy? By evaluating it according to the word. Only three texts were placed at the beginning of this lesson but this number could be increased greatly. If we but learn to pour out our hearts to God; to go into our inner chamber and shut the door; and pray at all times, the God who sees in secret will reward us openly. It will become apparent! Our faith and our prayers are the answers to the promises He has given us in His word.

Questions for Discussion:

1. Do you think it is valuable for us to teach our children “a prayer” so that they will learn “to pray”?
2. What kind of relationship are we to have with our God to permit us to pour out our hearts before Him?
3. Can we sin in prayer? How? Is this considered sufficiently in our day?
4. Do you think the injunction of Paul to “pray without ceasing” is commonly obeyed by God's people today?
5. Does our private, personal prayer life affect our public prayers? If so, how?
6. Are we, on the whole, as much interested in our communion with God as we are in communion with loved ones? Do you think we can really apply the words of Psalm 73:25 to ourselves? ☉

Public Prayers

**Lesson 6 Numbers 21:7, Ezra 10:1, Job 42:8
Jer. 42:2, Matt. 9:38, Acts 4:31
James 5:14-16, 1 Tim. 2:1-2, Job 1:4-5**

The number of texts above this lesson is much longer than usual and could be further increased because of the nature of the subject. Public prayers have been uttered as long as men have called on the name of the Lord

When we speak of public prayers we do not mean only those prayers which are uttered in large gatherings, such as church services, but also the prayers we utter at the table in our own homes. Many people find it very difficult to pray in public. Their private prayer life may be very good — let no one ever sit in judgment on a person's prayer life if he is not able to pray in public. But, we must realize that it is important that a person shall then *learn* to pray when others are listening. Why should someone be embarrassed to pray aloud before men when his God has commanded him to utter his prayers before Him?

Especially at the family altar *audible* prayer is important. We have to teach our children to pray! It is an exercise which brings family closer together than anything else. Job speaks of family prayers in the first chapter of his book. In the verses 4 and 5 we read that Job called his children together and then brought sacrifices for each of them. He hereby emphasized to them that their spiritual welfare was very much on his mind. It is here reported in the Old Testament framework of sacrifices; today we would say that he brought the need of each of his children before his God in prayer.

Church Prayers

Not only in family devotions but also in many other situa-

tions audible prayer is necessary. What would our Sunday services be if there were no prayers uttered? The word of God must indeed be proclaimed but the needs of the people must also be brought before the throne of grace. These prayers bind the people of God together. They are reminded not only of one another's needs, but also of the needs of the church and Kingdom of God throughout the world. Of course, we can also remember such causes in private prayers, and we do, but the whole church must also be involved in this.

Some must frequently pray in public! Especially ministers, but also elders and deacons must frequently lead in prayer. In order to be able to do this effectively one must be a man of prayer! Our private prayer life must give us the ability to lead others in prayer. Ministers and elders stand at the side of those who are sick or bereaved or lonely or straying and bring their needs before the throne of God. Deacons must bring the physical and material needs of the people on whom they call to His mercy seat. Each class or society session is opened and closed with prayer. This can become dangerous. Prayer can become common. We may well pray that the Lord will keep us from sin in the prayers utter. The Pharisees made themselves guilty in their prayers.

Prayers for Special Needs

When we pray with someone who is sick, the special need of that individual must be known so that we can then also pray with that understanding. Usually prayer strengthens the person who is sick. He is reminded that without the Lord's blessing the very best means at our disposal today do not help. Physicians have often been heard to say: "The surgery was successful, but the patient died." We call on the name of the Lord, for He only gives life and maintains it. The believer who is sick must not doubt God's love and mercy. He must also realize that the sickness he is suffering is not punishment. God has once punished our sins. He does chastize — but only those whom He loves! James tells the people of his day to call the elders of the church to pray for them when they are sick. Then sickness can prove to be a blessing. The bereaved likewise must be aided through their difficult time. Prayer brings them back where they should be! The lonely and aged have their lives brightened by the prayers uttered in their behalf. The straying must be shown their error, from the word of God. Their need must also be brought before Him. They must realize that the hands of love and compassion of the members of the body of Christ are still stretched out to them.

There are times of crisis when those who have true spiritual life within them cry out for the effectual prayers of others. When the people of Israel grievously sinned against their God, He sent fiery, poisonous serpents among them. When many among them died, they cried to Moses to pray for them. How often this man was called on to pray for the people of God so that they would not be consumed. The people of Israel did not realize how much they were indebted to this man for their very life. The Psalmist (Psalm 106:23) speaks of the important role Moses played in the welfare and deliverance of Israel. Moses stood "before Him in the breach". This is also the role of the leaders of God's people in other ages. They are to bring all the needs of the people before God and to implore His favor on them. The intercessors for God's people are the unsung heroes of the church!

The name of the number of subjects for which we are to pray is 'legion', but there are especially some subjects mentioned in Scripture which we should not forget. We are to pray that there may be laborers in the church and Kingdom of God. The church is to come together and ask the Lord of the church to call men to the tasks which have to be done in His Kingdom. This is not restricted to but does include the mission of the church. Jesus so teaches the people of His day (Matt. 9:38). How can the church and Kingdom fare well if these prayers do not arise to Him constantly? We would be remiss in our duty if we failed to offer them.

Prayers for Rulers

Paul stresses the fact that we are also to pray for rulers. This prayer is not restricted to "good rulers" but even includes the unrighteous rulers who were on the throne of Rome in the days in which the Apostle was writing (I Tim 2:1-2). In our prayers we come to the "Ruler of the kings of the earth." He is able to turn the hearts of rulers to Himself (Proverbs 21:1). However, we are to pray for kings and all others who have the rule over us so "that we may live a tranquil and quiet life." God is pleased to rule us by their hand. May their rule be such that our worship of our God and our godly life may not be disturbed. What a blessing it is that God's people are able to go to the house of worship unmolested! Pray for these rulers. That is a command!

Many institutions are seeking to do the work of the Lord in various areas of life. When we come together in worship, these institutions, whether of education or of mercy or of other kind, should be remembered before the throne of God's grace. In short, we are to pray for all the needs of Christendom. We are to be familiar with these institutions so we will be able to pray for them intelligently. Those who labor in various functions within the framework of God's kingdom should be supported by the prayers of his people. Perhaps the request for prayer comes rather "unthinkingly" at times. Many are asking for our support by prayer and gifts. It often seems that the latter would be appreciated far more than the former. On the other hand, to ask for the support in prayer for institutions which are based on the Word of God should be completely natural. The needs of Christendom are many in this sin-darkened world! May the God who alone is able to shed light be asked by His people to shed the light of the truth everywhere.

Praying Church

The church of Jesus Christ must be a praying church. This ought to be natural for her. She is called to proclaim the everlasting tidings of salvation to all men and to all nations, and she is to live close to her God so that she will be able to do the assigned work. It is much easier to discern whether or not a church is still preaching the word than to be able to tell whether she is still faithful to her task of being the intercessor for God's people and for the world! In time it will become perfectly clear because the strength is removed from the church and from the people which no longer prays.

The church has often felt its great need because its numbers were so small in this big world in which it had been placed. When the church realized that she was only a "remnant", the people came to the prophet Jeremiah and asked him to pray for them (Jer. 42:2). When the disciples in the early church were few in number and had received the mandate to disciple all nations — to do the seemingly impossible, they prayed. These were not perfunctory prayers. They prayed

for their very life. When they had given a good account of themselves before the magistrates of the day and had informed them of their plan to preach the word of the Lord boldly, they prayed and the place where they prayed was shaken (Acts 4:31)! The Lord heard them. Then they were filled with the Holy Spirit so that they might be able to continue to speak the word of God with all boldness. They had learned what it meant to have communion with their God. Would the church of today have more life and zeal if it again learned to pray as the Apostles did? "Ye have not because you ask not."

Although it ought to be evident to everyone who studies the texts above this lesson and various others, that the public prayers in Biblical times and in the history of the church have been very important, the problem may remain regarding how we engage in such prayer. Although our prayer may at first be halting, our God understands that prayer. Our prayer may not be eloquent, but we do not pray to impress men! We

should also bear in mind that the collection of prayers in the liturgy of the church can be helpful. Seldom are these beautiful prayers used. Our fathers placed them in the liturgy of the church to aid us in our prayer-life.

Questions for discussion:

1. Is public prayer "better" than private prayer? Discuss.
2. How important is it for a father in a home to lead his family in audible prayer? Can each one just as well pray silently?
3. Is there a tendency to pray the same prayer again and again, regardless of circumstances when we are called to pray aloud frequently? How can this be overcome?
4. Can a prayer at a sick bed make things worse? If so, how?
5. Why do some think it to be improper to pray for the government in the congregational prayer?
6. What conclusion could one draw from ministers' refusal to pray for certain Christian institutions? ●

Preaching from the Old Testament

Donald Macleod

If a young preacher wants to preach from the Old Testament he can easily find models. He has only to read the published expositions of Dr. Lloyd-Jones and John Stott to see master craftsmen at work in a contemporary idiom. The situation with regard to the Old Testament is quite different. It is often difficult to find even competent commentaries on the Old Testament. For any given part of the New Testament, one can easily find three or four masterpieces of insight and scholarship. By contrast, there are many books of the Old Testament for which not one single good commentary exists.

Underlying this there is something deeper. The hermeneutical barriers which separate us from the world of the Old Testament are enormous. Everything is on a grander scale than the difficulties of New Testament exposition. The time is more remote. The language is more alien. The culture is more unfamiliar.

Absolute Authority

Can we find any general principles to guide us? First of all, we can plant our feet firmly on the rock of the absolute authority of the Old Testament. It was precisely these holy scriptures that Paul described as "inspired." Curiously, he does not say that the writers were inspired. He says that the books were inspired. They were breathed out by God. Nor is this true merely of some portions of the Old Testament. It was *all* inspired. Some parts may be less interesting, less

majestic and even less useful than others. But every single part is inspired. What any Old Testament scripture says, God says.

This means at once that the entire Old Testament must be handled with reverence. It is all "holy." It also means that the preacher has to interpret it harmoniztically. He cannot set one part against another. Nor can he contrast any part of it with the truth. As a word from God, it must hang together coherently and harmonise with all that we know from other sources.

For the same reason the preacher knows that the whole Old Testament is profitable. Its usefulness is coexistent with its inspiration. This applies even to those parts of it which have been superseded, such as the civil law of Israel and the cultic arrangements associated with Tabernacle and Temple. The detailed instructions laid down in these connections are no longer binding on the church. Yet they still served to illustrate, symbolize and typify important truths, and the statutes of the theocracy can serve as paradigms to indicate how the principles of the Decalogue should be applied in specific political situations.

The Unity of Biblical Religion

The second important general principle is the unity of biblical religion. The whole of Scripture is a revelation of the one God, disclosing one single scheme of redemption and one covenant of grace. However important the transi-

tion from the Old Testament to the New, the parties, the promises and the stipulations of the covenant remain the same. Similarly, the church of God is one under both dispensations. The New Testament church is not a new church — instead, the Gentiles are grafted into the existing people of God, the stock of Abraham. We have Abraham's faith, we are Abraham's seed. It is because of this that the New Testament church can be described in terms lifted straight out of the Old Testament: we are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people.

One immediate result of this is that we can take an *ex-emplarist* approach to preaching the Old Testament. These saints were under the same ethic and subject to the same experiences as ourselves. The criticisms urged against them by God are still relevant today. Their moods are our moods, their perplexities our perplexities, their aspirations our aspirations. God's call to Abraham we can parallel from our own experience. His anguish as God tries His faith we can follow in our own souls. We can understand Moses as he resists God's call and protests, "I am not eloquent." We have often sat with Elijah under his juniper tree. We admire the compassion of Job as he cries, "The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord." But we can also follow him, in all the utterances of his impatience and frustration as he struggles, often unsuccessfully, to accept the will of God. What terrible utterances they are! God destroys the perfect as well as the wicked! He laughs at the trial of the innocent! "If I wash myself with snow water, and make my hands never so clean, yet shalt thou plunge me in the ditch and mine own clothes shall abhor me" (Job 9:30).

Of course, our calling is to be content, cheerful and thankful. But how marvellously encouraging it is to know, on those days when we cannot understand and cannot shrug off the pain and cannot hold back our own bitterness, that our complaints do not put us outwith the people of God. And how instructive it is, too, to look at the failings of these great Old Testament men of God. What a rebuke to our complacency to realise what happened to Moses and David and Solomon and Jonah. Yet, in a strange (and always dangerous) way, how comforting! Ungodly men and sometimes appalling failures, and yet God did not cast them off.

The differences in culture, temperament and theological insight which separate us from these men are enormous. Yet the things that unite us are far greater than those which divide us and the record of their struggles is one of the most precious possessions of the New Testament church.

Progressive Revelation

Yet there is a third principle — the progressiveness of revelation — which pulls us in the exactly opposite direction by reminding us of the distinctions between the two administrations of the covenant. God did not reveal Himself all at once. Instead, He gave us a great series of cumulative acts of self-disclosure, speaking "at sundry times and in divers manners." This never means that the later revelation contradicts the earlier, but it does mean that some doctrines which are very clear and prominent in the New Testament receive very little emphasis in the Old. For example, the Law and the Prophets contain virtually nothing on the resurrection of the body, the state of the soul between death and judgment or the doctrine of hell. Nor does the earlier revelation contain any overall doctrine of the Person of Christ. All the ingredients for a doctrine are there: the deity of Messiah, the humanity of Messiah, His suffering, His humiliation and

His victory. But no one in the Old Testament ever put these strands together to say, "God will become flesh." Nor did anybody ever synthesize the concepts of the Suffering Servant and the Son of Man, as our Lord Himself did when he said, "The Son of Man came to give his life a ransom for many."

In view of these considerations, the preacher must avoid ascribing to the saints of the Old Testament more light than they actually possessed. Augustine's famous illustration should remain with us. He compared the Old Testament to a room fully furnished but unlit. The occupants cannot see the contents because of the darkness. These become visible only in the light of the New Testament. That light puts nothing there which was not there before. But it does enable us to see adumbrations of the sacrifice of Christ, intimations of a blessed immortality and even hints of the doctrine of the trinity. But those who had only the light of the Old Testament could not see these things and it is anachronistic to read them back into their experiences. David in Psalm 51 had a very clear grasp of the mercy of God, but there is no indication that he saw that that mercy would operate through the blood of One who was God's own Son.

A further important result of the progressiveness of revelation is that we must emphasize much more than we do the superiority of the position of New Testament saints. We seem to have lost sight almost completely of the point made by Paul in Galatians 3: 23-4: 7. Before Christ came, he says, believers were like children, under the care of a Guardian (the Law) and in many respects no better-off than slaves. Not only did they lack much of the insight of New Testament believers. They lacked much of their comfort. It was much more difficult then to cry, "Abba! Father" or to come with boldness to the throne of grace. It was difficult — much more difficult — to face death with confidence. Instead of Paul's, "I have a desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better" we have David's, "For in death there is no remembrance of thee; in Sheol, who can give thee praise?" (Ps. 6:5).

Above all, the Old Testament was a time of bondage. The Custodian was everywhere, interfering with what one ate, what one wore, what one sowed, how one ploughed, how one built a house. Life was circumscribed with endless restrictions. Indeed, it was virtually impossible to move without stumbling against an ordinance. From all this, Christ liberated His church, a point which our own Confession brings out admirably: "Under the New Testament, the liberty of Christians is further enlarged in their freedom from the yoke of the ceremonial law, to which the Jewish church was subjected, and in greater boldness of access to the throne of grace, and in fuller communications of the free Spirit of God, than believers under the law did ordinarily partake of."

This great fact must come out — and come out prominently — in our preaching. We are no longer slaves, but sons: "Stand fast, therefore, in the freedom with which Christ has made us free" (Gal. 5:1). Even as we thank God for the inspired word of the Old Testament we are called upon to praise Him for the fact that we are not Old Testament believers. There are indeed parts of the Old Testament from which the very conclusion to be drawn by the preacher must be, "Thank God that things are different now."

The Nature of Prophecy

It is even more important for the preacher to have a firm grasp of the true nature of prophecy. We have tended to see the prophets too narrowly as fore-tellers and our expositions

focus almost exclusively on their predictions. They were, of course, fore-tellers, and we have no wish to minimize this. But they were much more. They were forth-tellers, men who have been summoned into God's presence, told His secret (or "mystery") and commissioned to be His spokesmen. Sometimes their message was a prediction, but more often it was not. The fact that Moses was the greatest of the prophets should alert us to this. His messages were hardly ever predictive. He came forth from the Presence with great doctrines such as the unity of God (Deut. 6:4); and with a massive statement of the Law of God, involving great moral principles, complex cultic ordinances and detailed civil statutes. The same is true of the other prophets. More often than not, they were bearers of weighty doctrinal and ethical messages. Indeed even when they are predictive, their predictions can be traps for the unwary preacher. Much of what they say about the last days does not refer to the end-time at all, but to the New Testament era, marked as the age of fulfilment by the incarnation of the Son and the coming of the Spirit.

But maybe the most important fact for the expositor of the prophets is that the great bulk of Old Testament prophecy consists of God's critical evaluation of the church. There are vast tracts which contain only indictment and arraignment of the people of God and if we go to them looking for predictions, Christology and clever allegories we shall go hopelessly wrong. Even in such a prophet as Hosea, with his matchless portrayal of the love and mercy and faithfulness of God, the judgmental element is uppermost: "Your love is like the morning mist, like the early dew that disappears. Therefore I cut you in pieces with my prophets, I killed you with the words of my mouth; my judgments flashed like lightning upon you" (Hos. 6:4,5). This was the nature of prophecy from the first, a fact upon which the perceptive Ahab laid his finger when he called Elijah "the troubler of Israel." Was the same not true of our Lord Himself, with His great denunciations of the Pharisees? Indeed, even after His resurrection was it not the same word — the word of judgment — which he sent to the Seven Churches by His servant John? "I have something against you!"

When we are thinking of doing a series of sermons on one of the prophets, this is something we must ponder carefully. If we are going to be faithful to our text, our sermons are going to be critical and judgmental; and if we are going to expound consecutively, this is the diet our people are going to have for weeks on end. The question is: Do they need it? When John Knox preached on Daniel at the Reformation, the church needed it. The Abomination of Desolation was only too obviously active. Similarly, in many main-line churches still, there is unfaithfulness to God on a massive scale. Similarly also, in the society of our own day there is acquisitiveness, disloyalty, exploitation and oppression. In all such situations, the message of the prophets is singularly appropriate, provided a man has the courage to preach it. But before we decide to give our own congregations the same fare, we must be sure that they, too, need, in Hosea's words, to be "cut and killed." Are they apostate idolators, guilty of deceit and violence, resting on formal religious observances while at the same time violating all the commandments of God?

We stand, as preachers, between the world and the word. We must know the world, especially our own particular segment of it. Otherwise we shall find ourselves accusing pious old ladies of "selling their souls to many lovers."

A Primary Source

Two points in conclusion. First, the Old Testament is our primary source for the knowledge of many doctrines. On such topics as the attributes of God, creation and the nature of man it is far fuller than the New Testament. Indeed, one of the grave dangers in neglecting the Old Testament is that we shall produce a generation of Christians gravely deficient in their knowledge of all these fundamental matters. Nor is the problem confined to doctrine. The great bulk of biblical teaching on the subjective and experiential side of Christianity is also to be found in the Old Testament. It is there — particularly in the Psalms, Job and Jeremiah — that we see reflected the inner moods and struggles of the people of God. To ignore this vein of revelation will lead inevitably either to a superficial religion or to blank incomprehension when we find God trying our faith.

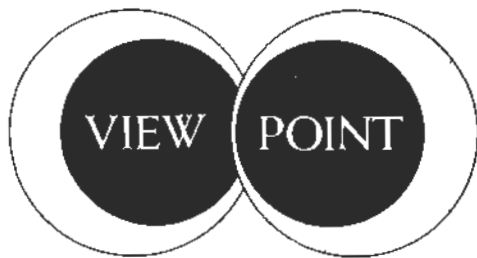
The earlier revelation also contains most of the biblical teaching on the world and our attitude to it. Compared with the New Testament, the Old is earthy, and that earthiness is an indispensable element in revelation. It tells us to subdue and colonize the earth; to be fruitful and multiply; to till the soil and keep our gardens; to name and classify the animals. It shows us men drinking wine, playing their harps and singing songs. It shows us men like Daniel, mastering pagan learning, rising to the top in the world's greatest bureaucracy and eventually becoming the leading politician of a decadent empire — all without defiling himself. It shows us the dignity of the shepherd and the artisan, the legitimacy of the military and the God-giveness of architectural and artistic skill. None of that is rescinded in the New Testament. Indeed, much of it is reiterated. But it was because the Reformed church was so deeply rooted in the Old Testament that Abraham Kuyper could say of it, "The avoidance of the world has never been the Calvinistic mark but the shibboleth of the Anabaptist."

Finally, the danger of a false Christocentrism. It is very well to say that Christ is everywhere in the Old Testament and that what we must take out of every text is the contribution it makes to God's revelation of Him. But sometimes those who approach the Old Testament like this are scornful of exemplarist (or as they would call it, *moralizing*) preaching. They would argue that you must not use narrative texts to teach merely ethical lessons. Such stories as David and Goliath, they say, are not there to moralize, but to extend the horizons of salvation history.

The trouble with this is that it does not square with the way the New Testament uses the Old. What are we to make for example, of the Lord's words to His disciples, "Remember Lot's wife!"? Furthermore, the procedure misconceives Christ's relation to the Old Testament. It is safer to say that He is everywhere *behind* it than to say that He is everywhere *in* it. Every preacher must come to his people with "the mind of Christ". But when Paul made that claim for himself, he was not preaching Christology. He was giving elementary directions with regard to the place of women in the church. Yet he was still "preaching Christ" because he was expressing *His* mind.

The basic principle here must surely be: Every word in the Old Testament is *from* Christ, but not every word is *about* Christ. If so, then we are as surely preaching Christ when we draw inferences from the politics of Solomon as we are when faithfully expounding the 53rd chapter of Isaiah. ●

This editorial is reprinted from the February, 1984, Monthly Record of the Free Church of Scotland.



A Premise of Synod Infallibility?

Cecil Tuininga

A recent church bulletin contained a "Report on Synod 1984 for Classis. . ." Its opening paragraph reads, "There is no doubt that every Synod of the CRC is unique and different. Different issues, the composition of the delegates, the emotional climate in the denomination, and many other factors account for this. Synod 1984 falls in that description entirely. Yet the beautiful fact is that in all the proceedings we believe sincerely in the guidance and leading of the Holy Spirit. The CRC continues therefore always on the basis of confessing an obedience and loyalty to our Lord. It is in that manner that, . . . , present a brief report of Synod 1984 to the churches of our classis."

Accounting to the logic of this report, beginning with the premise that the Holy Spirit's work is divine and hence without error, since synod is led by the Holy Spirit we can conclude that its work is without error, or infallible.

The reporters, indeed, did not say exactly that or perhaps believe that either. But the logic of the report points to that

conclusion. Since synods are led by the Holy Spirit all of its work falls under a kind of sanctifying halo. Otherwise what does it mean that because our synods are being thus guided and led that they continue "... always on the basis of confessing an obedience and loyalty to our Lord?" Must we, therefore, conclude that the decisions of synods are to be accepted because they are products of the Spirit's guidance and leading?

I wonder if anyone would really want to defend such a premise? If so, would he also say the same of consistory meetings? Consistory meetings are indeed gatherings of those in the position of highest authority in the Church of Jesus Christ. If delegates from a classis, who in turn are delegates from a local consistory are being led and guided by the Holy Spirit in such a beautiful way when at synod, how much more will they be so led when the local consistory meets! Then the work of the local consistory certainly comes under this spiritual halo.

Surely no one will deny that the Church of Jesus Christ, in past ages as also today, is led and guided by the Holy Spirit. But the important question is: Just *how* does the Holy Spirit lead and guide the Church? The Church is defined in Scripture as being "the pillar and foundation of the truth" (I Tim. 3:15). Where the Church remains true to the Word of God there it is led and guided by the Holy Spirit. Therefore, in the measure a church knows and obeys the Truth, it is being led and guided by the Holy Spirit.

The same things hold true for any meeting of synod. A synod is led and guided by the Holy Spirit in the measure it upholds and adheres to the clear teachings of Scripture. We are told that on some issues the voting went as close as 81 to 76 or 82 to 77. Which group of voters was being led and guided by the Holy Spirit, and which was not? Surely they cannot both be right! One of the two numbers of voters is right and the other wrong, depending on which is following God's Word.

On the other hand, can't we conclude that the Holy Spirit leads and guides the Church of Jesus Christ and somehow brings it to the right conclusions through the right and wrong views or opinions of men. There is indeed a modicum of truth in that view. But does that hold when, as in the last synod (1984) the voting on placing women in the office of deacon involved the setting aside of Scripture on the part of those who voted in favour? We are very definitely not allowing the Holy Spirit to lead and guide us when we tamper with the Truth to get our own wishes.

To say the very least, we are on very slippery ground if we posit the quoted premise. Who could question a synod's work and decisions if a synod certainly led by the Spirit, could not possibly go or be wrong? Proceeding on that premise while setting aside the sure Word of God, set the Church adrift with all those called to charter its course blindfolded. If we do indeed proceed with this premise we are in deep trouble. I wonder whether the delegates who wrote that report really thought through the implication of their statement. I hope they intended this differently.

Unfortunately one hears and reads this kind of reasoning again and again. It is used as a silencer of all criticism. Don't you know, we are told, that synod is led and guided by the Holy Spirit? Are we really so blinded and misled as to believe that the Holy Spirit still leads us whether we listen to God's Word or not? May the Lord bring us to our senses! ●

Cecil Tuininga, Edmonton, Alberta

Common Grace, BANE OR BLESSING?

John H. Sietsema

Because of an interest shown in Protestant Reformed history and theology by members of my own family, I felt the need to do the same. From my reading experience, I have arrived at some observations. The first is that there are *seemingly* few books at the layman's level that deal specifically with the concept of common grace. Too, though of less consequence, is that ministers whom I asked to give suggestions on books that defend common grace were at loss to do so.

However, the more I reflect on this idea of common grace, the more I see that saving grace is an interior activity of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of the elect only, whereas common grace is God's goodness to all mankind alike in the realm of the five senses. It is a preservative activity that makes culture and civilization possible. When the Lord withdraws this benevolence — this striving of His Holy Spirit — then mankind will be like the wicked in the days of Noah. Only God's judgment can follow.

Because of the Lord's goodness in the realm of culture and civilization, the Christian does share many good things with the unbeliever. In the past our forefathers either ignored or openly rejected much in the field of cultural expression because they saw the blight present in the field. They wanted to be unstained from the world. Their total rejection of all cultural expression tended towards legalistic Christianity: "Touch not; taste not."

Today, however, with our full embrace of the concept of common grace, we are drifting in a more perilous direction, for we seem to be reaching even into the world's cultural garbage bins. What do I mean? This:

In our Christian high schools we have allowed the dance and rock music to be used in the very facilities which were dedicated to the name of Christ.

In our advance spheres of learning we have those who defend questionable books which many in the public school sector vehemently reject. Those who defend such a work as *Catcher in the Rye* justify their stance on the basis of their greater learning and sophistication. This book has more profanity and obscenity between its covers than all the profanity and obscenity I was forced to hear in the several factories in which I worked.

Too, it troubles me that those who have turned their backs on the Christian world-and-life view and have rejected the Reformed training of their youth (such as DeVries and Feikema) are welcomed as heroes when they return to their former circles only because they have gained worldly renown in the field of literature.

It is troubling to hear that a few of our own ministers wish our denomination to join the World Council of Churches, an organization committed to the social gospel, a social gospel that has too much of a red tinge.

Because of the extreme affluence in some of our Christian homes, many feel free to take a three or four months

annual leave of absence from their local congregations. None of them would think of doing the same in their place of work or business. What then happens to the organic nature of the church when members take so light a view of their local congregation? In a church of 180 families only 69 person were present at an evening service.

Our involvement as Christians in the world, be it socially, culturally, or economically seems to have become so intense that we hear little or nothing about the second coming of our Lord from our Reformed pulpits. The silence about the end time and the Lord's return is almost deafening? Why?

I believe in common grace but always with a keen sense of the antithesis to regulate and control our involvement in the sphere of common grace. ●

John H. Sietsema, 2016 Rosewood Avenue, Grand Rapids, MI 49506.

Don't Surrender to Relativism

J. Tuininga

The April '84 issue of *Calvin Theological Journal* contains a paper read by the Rev. Clarence Boomsma on the occasion of Dr. J. Kromminga's retirement as president of Calvin Seminary. The title of this paper is: "What Has Happened Theologically to the Chr. Ref. Church Since World War II?" It is an interesting and irenic analysis of the CRC since W.W. II, and at the same time somewhat disturbing.

I wish to comment on one aspect of Boomsma's analysis. Taking his cue from some articles written several years ago by Dr. H. Stob, in which he analysed the Chr. Ref. Church in terms of various "minds" (the "mind of safety," the "militant mind," the "positive mind," etc.), Boomsma sees certain "minds" in the CRC. He describes the "militant mind" as characterized by "aggressive action to root out any defections and to expose any weakness in the defense of the faith." This mind, says Boomsma, came to "organized expression" in the Reformed Fellowship, and to "more radical expression" in the Association of Christian Reformed Laymen.

He goes on to say that this "mind" brought about the controversy regarding the infallibility of the Scriptures in connection with certain views or statements of Kromminga in the late fifties. This "mind" was also behind the so-called "Dekker case" in the sixties, and the "Verhey case" in the seventies.

Now whatever one may think of describing the CRC in terms of different "minds," I find this analysis a very strange one indeed, to say the least. So the "militant mind" was responsible for raising the above-named issues. If there had been no such "mind," then apparently these controversies would have not erupted. For good or ill, whatever the case may be. But is that all there is to it? And is that all one can

say? Are right and wrong, the truth and the lie, measured by "minds" in the church? Or should the "militant mind" disappear and make way for the "positive mind"? I find this whole way of argumentation not only quite silly, but also dangerous. Do we judge the rightness or wrongness of certain views in the church by determining what "mind" they come from? Or are there views of Scripture and theological viewpoints that are *really* wrong, regardless of who holds them? Were we just beating the air in the cases mentioned above, or was there actual or potential heresy involved? *That* is the question, and not what "mind" gave rise to these controversies. The latter method *relativizes* the truth. It's only the "militant mind" that feels threatened by such views, and that makes such an issue of them! Too bad the promoters of this "mind" are not more "positive"! Then we wouldn't have all these controversies!

Sorry, but I find this kind of analysis not only very unhelpful, but also dangerous. Whatever happened to the view that truth is truth no matter who says it, and that the lie is the lie wherever it comes from? And talking of being "militant," does not Jude tell us to *contend earnestly* for the faith once for all delivered to the saints (vs. 3)? Should not the entire church be militant for the Lord and His Word? Never mind the "minds" in the church; let the whole church be valiant for truth. ●

J. Tuninga, Lethbridge, Alta.

Book Review

MARRIAGE TO A DIFFICULT MAN:
THE "UNCOMMON UNION" OF JONATHAN AND SARAH EDWARDS

Elisabeth D. Dodds

This is a delightful historical novel about the life and times of the Puritans in New England. One commentator remarked: "That it is a tempting blend of family guidance book,

sociological study, psychologically, and devotionally American historical biography."

Many books are written today about how to solve the problems of modern living, and many of them give pat answers. In this book you will find vivid examples of how the Edwards Family and the Christian community faced life in the world, and yet not of the world. Their standard was the Word of God. Of course there were no perfections but a constant striving to be pleasing to the Lord.

This book touches, in the experience of the characters, upon the many problems that face Christians in today's world. Edwards was a faithful husband and father, devoted to his wife and concerned about his children. Sarah was a loving wife and mother. She had the care of a husband and ten children, and still the home was noted for hospitality.

Mrs. Dodds asks the question, "What did they do to help their children turn out so well?" She answers this question, "It could well be a pattern for modern parents and could help them administer a potent but palatable blend of permissiveness and discipline that would result in just the kind of mature handling of problems every parent hopes his children will have."

The Edwards also had to go through a time of unemployment because of his dismissal from the Northampton Church. The dignity with which they faced this circumstance could well fortify people in similar situations today.

How did the Edwards Family handle grief? When their daughter Esther's husband, Aaron Burr, died, she wrote to her parents: "God has seemed sensibly near in such a supporting and comfortable manner that I think I have never experienced the like. Earnestly intreat the Lord that I may never faint under this severe stroke."

Sarah Edwards' response to the letter informing her of her husband's death at Princeton, addressed to one of her daughters, was, "My very dear child, what shall I say! A holy and good God has covered us with a dark cloud. O that we may kiss the rod and lay our hands upon our mouths! The Lord has done it."

A Latin inscription on Edwards' grave in the Princeton Cemetery said in part, "Do you ask, traveler, what manner of man he was? The College weeps for his loss, the church weeps, but heaven rejoices in receiving him."

This is a book well worth reading, and as someone has said as easy to read for relaxation as for information. ●

Reviewed by Clara Einfeld Hamstra, retired school teacher living in Lynden, Washington.