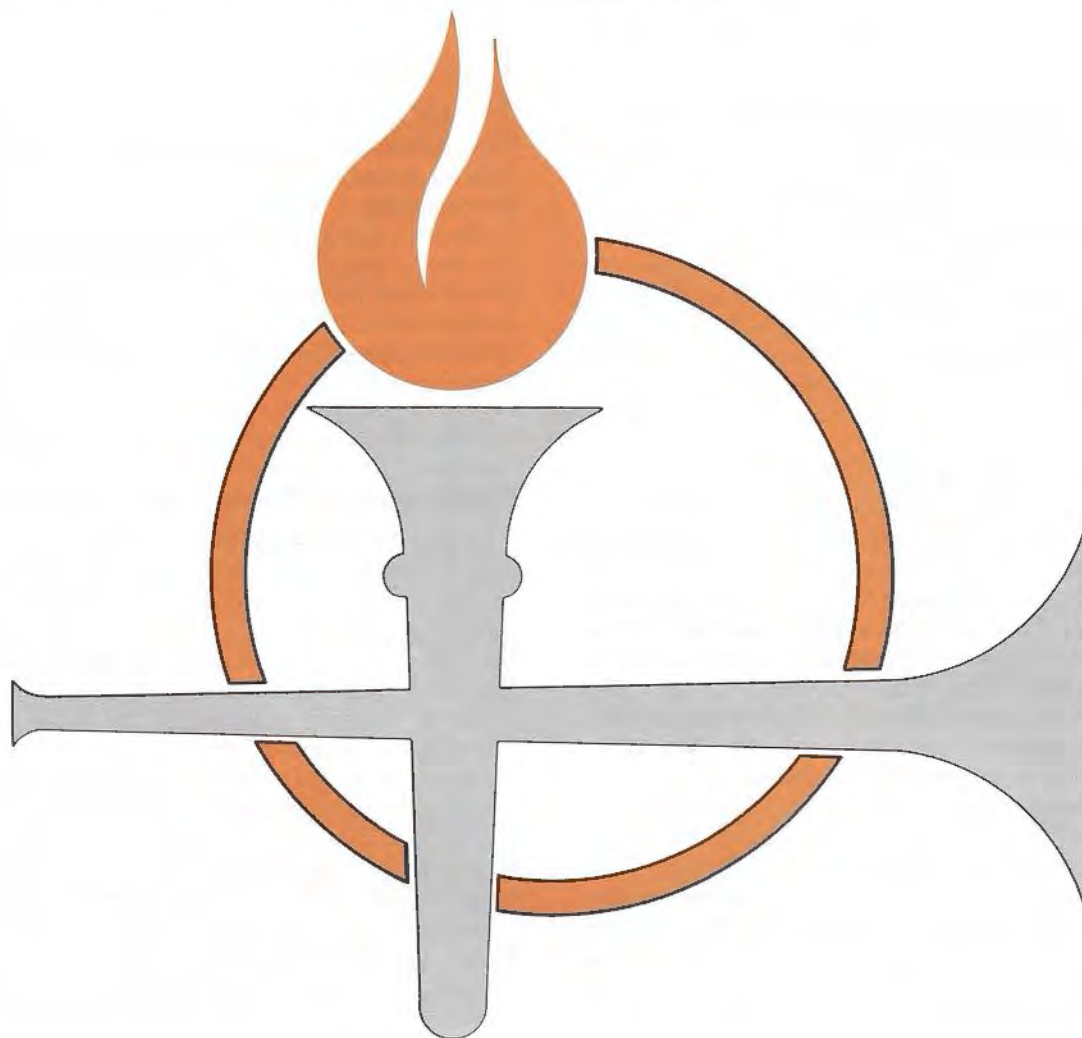


THE OUTLOOK

DEVOTED TO THE EXPOSITION AND DEFENSE OF THE REFORMED FAITH

JULY / AUGUST 1985



WHERE ARE WE GOING?
SYNOD REPORT
LOSING YOUR TEMPER FOR GOOD

A BANNER OF TRUTH

Discussion on the Holy Spirit

Peter De Jong

The February 1985 *Banner of Truth* features a superb 7-page review of the new Inter-Varsity Press book of J.I. Packer, *KEEP IN STEP WITH THE SPIRIT*. The reviewer is J. Douglas MacMillan, Professor of Church History and Principles at the Free Church College in Edinburgh.

Both Dr. Packer's many years of notable exposition and defense of the evangelical faith and the current explosion of the charismatic movement ensure that this book will gain wide attention and influence. The reviewer finds a large part of the book's teaching on the Holy Spirit extremely valuable and helpful.

The Spirit "Floodlights" Christ

In the confusion that exists about what in the Holy Spirit's many-sided work is to be stressed, Packer shows that the "primacy must be yielded to the Spirit's ministry of Christ to the believer and to the church." He proves this by centering attention on a part of the New Testament which the reviewer believes "has been far too much neglected in most works on the Holy Spirit, John, chapters 14 to 16." This passage affords the "key for understanding the central thrust of the Spirit's ministry" since Pentecost. (Dr. MacMillan finds this treatment so good that he wishes that "it might be read and deeply pondered by every Christian, and certainly, by every preacher of the Gospel.") This means that the Spirit's new covenant ministry is "self-effacing, directing all attention away from himself to Christ and drawing folk into . . . communion with Christ." This characteristic is the criterion by which supposedly spiritual movements ("ecumenical," "charismatic," "small-group," "lay apostolate," "world missionary," etc.), as well as supposedly "spiritual" experiences may be gauged. Packer recalled walking to a church one evening to preach on the words "He shall glorify me" (John 16:14). Noticing the floodlit building, he observed that floodlighting was exactly the illustration needed to show the work of the Spirit. "When floodlighting is well done, the floodlights are so placed that you do not see them; you are not supposed to see where the light is coming from; what you are meant to see is just the building on which the floodlights are trained. . . . This perfectly illustrates the Spirit's new covenant role. He is, so to speak, the hidden floodlight shining on the Savior."

Because this important point is often missed, the Spirit's work is often misunderstood and misrepresented as centering on the Christian instead of Christ, on man instead of God.

Packer also firmly rejects the common "two-level" (or "second blessing") view of conversion, observing that each believer should experience the full ministry of the Spirit from the beginning.

The Holy Spirit "sanctifies" or makes holy. Accordingly, Dr. Packer deplores the widespread neglect of the pursuit of holy living which should characterize every Christian. The reviewer notes the valuable analysis made of various views of sanctification, and the excellent treatment of Romans 7 in an appendix.

Compromising Truth — A Bridge too Short

Despite the many excellencies of this book, the reviewer finds it marred in its treatment of the charismatic movement, because it is so gentle that it fails to state the definite conclusions one would expect from Dr. Packer. In balancing the "good" and "not so good" points of the movement, MacMillan finds that here it does not subject the charismatic claims to the clear judgment of the Bible as it should. Although Packer admits "the fact . . . that the theology most commonly professed within the movement to account for its own claimed distinctives is deeply unbiblical," and that the peculiar charismatic doctrines (Spirit baptism, tongues and healing ministries) cannot be equated with the biblical references used to support and explain them," he is too kind to consistently apply that judgment to the various charismatic claims. The result is confusion and self-contradiction. For example, he suggests that although charismatic tongues speaking is not the "tongues" of I Corinthians, it is "for some people at any rate . . . a good gift of God," while "for others it would be the unspirited and trivial irrelevance that some now think it to be wherever it appears." "Apart from the startling implications that any good gift of God could ever be a trivial irrelevance to a biblical believer, what strikes home is the total absence of any objective criteria by which to judge whether any specific experience is one or the other" of these opposites. Thus MacMillan sees Packer at this point sliding into "a strange subjectivism." "The chasm between biblical evangelicalism and the charismatic movement proves to be wider, one fears, than Packer has allowed for, and so, the bridge he has tried to build does not span it. The view he has advanced cannot lie securely on either side of what is really a great gulf."

Confusion about Martyn Lloyd-Jones' View

The same issue of the *Banner of Truth* contains an 8-page article by its editor, Iain H. Murray, on "Martyn Lloyd-Jones on the Baptism with the Holy Spirit," followed by a 2-page editorial on "Controversy." In the article, Editor Murray analyzes where Lloyd-Jones stood with respect to charismatic claims. Much of Lloyd-Jones' preaching on these matters took place long before the present charismatic movement became prominent and his views at a number of points do not support their claims. He finds Dr. Lloyd-Jones "coming close . . . to saying that so long as you have true assurance . . . the manner in which you obtained it does not matter. The slow drizzle and the more spectacular sudden cloud-burst achieve the same end." Editor Murray concludes that "Dr. Lloyd-Jones may not succeed, in the judgment of some of us, in proving that this experience of sensible presence (of the Spirit) is capable of being constructed into a New Testament doctrine, but we surely need his exhortations to seek an experimental knowledge of God. It would be tragic if controversy were to divert all who love Christ from prayer for the outpouring of the Spirit of God."

Our Necessary Controversy with the Charismatic Movement

In the editorial on "Controversy" Murray observes that, "At the present time there are those who tell us that providence is summoning the charismatic and the reformed movements to a combination of their separate forces." They argue that the reformed emphasis on thought and doctrine needs to be allied with the charismatic emphasis on warmth and life. But Murray sees this apposition between "doctrine" or orthodoxy and "life" as an error. "What really is at issue is the doctrine itself." He sees churches learning again "that life proceeds from truth; 'Man shall live . . . by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.' " Despite much pressure to weaken their commitment, "the widespread return to doctrinal Christianity has been a work of God and it is too strong for many to be deflected by offers of 'life' from a movement which, 'powerful' and 'exciting' though it may presently be, presents no convincing case from Scripture."

Yet Murray cautions that in necessary controversy, we should (1) contend against principles rather than persons, (2) realize that controversy may, in the providence of God, produce valuable results, as most of the church doctrines have been defined by controversy, and (3) we need to remember that our judgments are not final and that we must pray that the necessary church judgments "will be in accord with the Word of God and therefore with the future judgment of Christ."

In many ways we are made aware of the remarkable and growing influence of the Banner of Truth Trust, by means of both its books and its magazine, in promoting Biblical reformation and evangelism throughout the world. (A recent report told of its influence in a growing church movement among Australian aborigines!) Many church members and ministers who are looking for substantial help in the up-building of Christian faith and life are profiting by using its materials. In this instance we find it giving us valuable help to Biblically assess and deal with a charismatic movement that is also raising questions in many of our church circles.

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

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THE BIBLE IN THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH

Where Are We Going?

W. Robert Godfrey

This is a question that I approach with a bit of hesitancy, because I come to it as something of an outsider. I was not reared in a Christian Reformed Church. I am not of Dutch background, am not a mid-westerner and was not educated in any of the institutions of the Church. But I think that sometimes an outsider's perspective can be helpful, because sometimes an outsider can see a little more clearly. After all, I am a minister of the Christian Reformed Church, and—more important to me than that—I found Jesus Christ as my Savior in the Christian Reformed Church, and so that church, in its past and its future, is very precious and a matter of great concern to me. I feel privileged to reflect with you on the question of where we are going as a church. In connection with it the words of Hebrews 2:1 have kept coming to my mind, "Therefore we must pay the closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it."

What Have We Heard?

That set me thinking about what I have heard in the Christian Reformed Church. What were the distinctives of that church as I experienced them in the early sixties as a junior in high school I first began to attend one? I had occasionally attended a rather Liberal church with my parents, although we did not do so regularly—and I remember being struck when I started to attend a Christian Reformed church by the wonderful sense of community that I observed there. I remember being struck in the first worship service that I attended by two things. One was the singing. Suddenly I heard a volume, enthusiasm and warmth in singing the praises of God that was most impressive. And then I saw families sitting together—what I later came to know as the covenant character of the church in action—sitting together to praise the Lord. There were people of all ages worshipping God. And that covenant community life has become the more precious to me as I have come to better understand it. A variety of things, some of them ethnic, united these people. But there was something much more important than the ethnic unity; there was a real common commitment to Jesus Christ and a realization that He came to lay claim on all of our lives and He had created in this church a loving, caring community. It was a community that stood at odds with a lot of

American evangelical communities, which were good in many ways, by showing a balance and fullness that I did not see in other places. It did not seem to be infected with the anti-intellectualism that is found in some evangelical groups. These people had given themselves to building Christian schools and Christian colleges. They were not just concerned about saving souls, but had a broader sense of ministry to the whole person that impressed me. I was struck too by the piety that I saw as I heard people singing the Psalms, the very Word of God. I saw people keeping the sabbath day holy as a source of spiritual renewal. And I saw what I came to know as the antithesis between Christian living and the living of this world, manifested in the church that I attended.

A Community Formed by God's Word

I felt the Biblical character of this true Christian living, of its understanding of God and His service. I could see that this community had been formed by careful listening to God's Word. The community helped me begin to study the Bible. Patiently it led me as a teen-ager who knew nothing about it into that Word by careful and inductive Bible studies. It helped me to see not only the depth, but also breadth of the system of Scripture, and I began to treasure the systematic theology of the Reformed Faith, the system of doctrine I found in the Scriptures. I realized that the Scriptures were not just random statements, but that the Scriptures came from God and therefore reflected His unity, His singleness of purpose. There was one message to be found in the Scriptures, and I believed then and believe now that that message is best contained and comprehensively summarized in the Reformed confessions of faith. The Christian Reformed Church in the early sixties opened up the Bible to me and said "This is God's Word; believe it!" And I did and I continue to do so. In the words of Hebrews, I have placed my hope in God's promise as a "sure and steadfast" "anchor of the soul." That is where the Christian Reformed Church stood and that is what it taught me. That is where I came to stand, and I thank God for that heritage.

We as a denomination have been uniquely blessed by having heard in depth and in fullness the Word of God. The writer of the letter to the Hebrews warned that Christian peo-

ple faced the danger of "drifting away from what they heard." The word for "drifting" as here used suggests a gradual, almost imperceptible movement by which one slides away from where one once was and ought to be, in a direction that is more and more dangerous. These Hebrew Christians had heard God's Word. They had come to His Son Jesus Christ. Now the danger flag is being raised against their drifting away. There may be no more apt word to describe the problems we are facing as a denomination than the word "drifting." Are we drifting away from our Reformed heritage? It is not so much that we are consciously turning our backs on it—or have studied it carefully and said, "That's wrong!"—as just letting it fade away.

What Is "Reformed?"

What does it mean to be "Reformed today? As I read or listen to some in our church, it seems that to be "Reformed" is being defined as always changing. I begin to wonder whether we have clearly in our minds what it really means to be Reformed. A *Banner* article some time ago stated that the Reformed haven't given much thought to worship. As a church historian I was amazed at that statement, in view of the whole libraries filled with books that the 16th and 17th century Reformed wrote about worship! Perhaps we haven't given much thought to what our fathers wrote about worship. The Reformed gave intense study to the subject of worship because they were so concerned that our worship be according to God's Word. We haven't examined our heritage of worship and seen that it was grounded in the Word of God. And so we are in great danger of being led astray by music that doesn't honor the holiness of God, by ritual more oriented to our experience than to God's grace, by novel forms of worship such as liturgical dancing, utterly alien to the Reformed tradition and the spirituality of its worship. See how we are drifting in our worship.

Now consider our churches' discipline. I was impressed as a teen-ager by the careful conduct of discipline in the church which I attended. It was apparent too in the careful catechising of the young, its care in teaching them the Reformed Faith from the catechism. I remember sitting in church when sins against the 7th commandment were publically announced and the consistory expressed its joy at the signs of repentance. Now we seem to be losing discipline altogether, as gross public sins apparently go unchecked. Discipline has always been peculiarly precious to Dutch Reformed Christianity, and its Belgic Confession was the first Reformed confession to declare that discipline was one of the marks of the church. If we are losing our sense of discipline we are losing an essential part of our heritage.

Although our synod agendas are filled with more and more study reports about more and more subjects, we seem to be less and less certain about what it means to be Reformed, to understand the Word of God, and to live before Him as Reformed people. Our community is threatened by this drift into uncertainty and indifference. The drift is shown and perhaps has its cause in our attitude toward the Scriptures. We no longer as a church have much confidence in the Scriptures. Psalm 119:105 declares, "Thy Word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path." God's Word is proclaimed as being a lantern that we can hold up when we walk in a dark place so that we will see how to walk and not trip. Yet voices in our church today often imply that the Word of God isn't really a clear light, but that it seems to cast only a pale shadow for many. Our confessions declare that we believe without

doubt all things contained in the Word of God, but our conduct raises questions about whether we are sure of that.

The Canons of Dordt are particularly precious to me and I spent two years studying to write a doctor's dissertation on them. They are part of the great heritage of the church, as they unfold for it the doctrine of God's sovereign elective purpose. But we are told in *The Banner* that for most of the Christian Reformed Church the Canons' teaching about the doctrine of election and reprobation is a dead letter. Is the Biblical message of the canons living in the teaching of our churches and in the hearts of our people as it should?

Misusing the Bible to Contradict the Bible

There is a growing impression that the Scripture doesn't speak clearly and comprehensively, and that there is no real system of doctrine to be gained from the Scripture in all of its parts. We are being told that the most we can hope for is that the Scripture gives us certain broad principles and that we then have to decide how those principles are applied. As I listened carefully, I think that has been the basic line of argument put forward in the discussion about women in office in recent years in our churches. Those favoring women in office say that there is a great principle, stated in Gal. 3:28, that "there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus," and that we can take that great principle and understand it to say that, since in Christ there is neither male nor female, both male and female may hold offices in the churches. Although that may seem reasonable, I can find no good interpretation that can explain away the words of the Apostle Paul in 1 Timothy 2: in which he says, "I permit no woman to teach or have authority over men." He goes on to say a few verses later in the third chapter, that he writes "so that ye may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the Living God, the pillar and bulwark of the truth." He was not saying that this applied merely to that church or to the special conditions of the first century. These are the rules of the church of God. Some want to put all these specifics of the Word of God aside and speak only of a broad principle. I fear that as a church we are in danger of adopting the same kind of approach to the Scripture as Korah. In Numbers 16 we learn that this leading Levite became envious of Moses and Aaron and charged Moses with having forgotten the principle that all of the congregation were holy, in putting himself over them. God had indeed said that all of His people were holy, as we read in Exodus 19. But Korah concluded from that principle that therefore all of God's people may be priests. The trouble with Korah's interpretation was that he had not allowed the principle stated in Scripture to be interpreted by the specifics of God's revelation. God had specifically restricted the priesthood to Aaron and his family. Korah did not take the whole of Scripture. He took one principle out of its context and therefore drew absolutely wrong conclusions. We must see and understand every principle and every specific in the light of the whole of the Bible. We must honor all of God's Word and live all of our lives in its light.

A few chapters previously this book of Numbers tells of the spies' return from Canaan bringing a majority and minority report. While the majority reported that the people of Canaan were too powerful for Israel to attack, the minority urged them with God's help to proceed. Because the people refused to go ahead, they were condemned to forty years of wilderness wandering. Then, changing their minds, they

tried to attack Canaan despite Moses' warning that their resolution came too late, and they were defeated. We must as Reformed people take very seriously Moses' warning that whenever we transgress the commandment of the Lord we are not going to find progress, development or success in the service of the Lord, but only failure.

Why Have We Begun to Drift?

Why have we begun to drift? Why are problems besetting us? I suppose that answers may vary from person to person.

1. Some seem to be looking for new kinds of experiences. Finding something lacking in their own experience, they see that as a failure of our Reformed tradition and they look for something new.
2. Some find that the virtues of Calvinism have made them prosperous, and the delights and pleasures of good material things in this world have tempted them to drift away from their heritage.
3. Some, I think, drift because of their desire for the approval of this world, for respectability—It is a great temptation for scholars (who may hope to be immortalized by being quoted in a footnote) to seek the approval of unbelieving as well as believing fellow scholars. Churches get a desire to be recognized as significant by other churches—that seems to account for voices urging us to join the World Council of Churches and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, and never to discipline anybody at the Reformed Ecumenical Synod. It betrays a tragic indifference to the forces of unbelief that dominate institutions such as the World Council and the World Alliance. We are drifting even into fellowship with unbelievers. We are in danger of adopting a policy of accommodation and completely losing our recognition of the antithesis between believer and unbeliever.
4. I believe that the real cause of all such drifting is worldliness. In church a couple of weeks ago we sang the familiar hymn, "Am I a Soldier of the Cross?" My attention was especially caught by the third stanza, "Is this vile world a friend to grace, to help me on to God?" It struck me that many people are answering that question, "Yes," and "It's old-fashioned to call this world 'vile'." "When you see all the positive characteristics of this world, you see how it is a friend to grace to lead us on to God." But, brothers and sisters, I don't believe that this is true. The evil one is still "a roaring lion seeking to devour." The world is vile and an enemy to grace. We need to beware of worldliness in our hearts, in our homes and in our churches.

Where Are We Drifting?

Where are we drifting? What are the options open to us as we drift as a church? Where are we likely to end? The options are really few.

1. If we keep drifting we could split, as the Hervormde Kerk split a hundred years ago. I do not think that that is likely at this point.
2. Or we could drift to a point where two factions agree to live and let live, somewhat as the Reformed Church in America has done. I do not think that likely either. As a church we have always done things together and have moved together.
3. We could move progressively in a Liberal direction. Probably many think that that could not happen here, just

as many in the Gereformeerde Kerken in the 1950s said that it could not happen there.

Also here, 60 years ago in May of 1925 the Presbyterian Church in the USA held its General Assembly. At that assembly the Conservative, evangelical, Bible-believing members had a clear, working majority. Many said, "Now is the time to stand up against the Liberalism in our church. Now is the time to say to the Liberals who are denying the resurrection of Christ and His virgin birth that they have no place in our church." But they didn't do anything. They appointed a study committee. Within eight years their general assembly began the process of disciplining those conservative and consistently Reformed members of the church who formerly had had great authority and influence in the general assembly. Only eight years separated a general assembly with a conservative majority from the beginning of discipline against uncompromising Reformed members of the church. Within eleven years of that general assembly meeting Dr. J. Gresham Machen and those who supported him had been disciplined by the church and suspended from office and had formed a new, though tiny, continuing Presbyterian church. Reformed churches that have strong institutions at the top run the risk of moving very quickly in a Liberal direction. Machen himself expressed his surprise that the church could have gone so far and so fast. And he commented that here, as elsewhere, the destructive forces have been content to labor for the most part in the dark, working behind the scenes, so that one did not know what was really happening. But many continued to claim that the conservatives who left to form the Orthodox Presbyterian Church were too hasty, because the conservatives were still a majority in the old church. And the church slid steadily away from the Truth. Machen in his great book, *Christianity and Liberalism*, said that part of the problem was the lack of honesty in the Liberal parties in many church bodies, so that they misrepresented as mere differences about Bible interpretation views of people who were really hostile to the very foundations of the Faith. These people used the same language but meant something very different by it. In this way a once great Reformed Church slipped away into Liberalism.

Thank God, our problems are not that great. We do not have the kind of virulent Liberalism that denies the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead that Machen faced in the 20s in the Presbyterian Church. But the writer of Hebrews in chapter 3 reminds us, "Take care, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the Living God." We must recognize that our faithfulness as a church is not a foregone conclusion, that it will not stand without effort. We must recognize that we are the same kind of church institution that the Presbyterian Church was, with a strong synod. We are under great pressure to do everything together. Our tradition, unlike those of some Reformed churches who do not support their denominational projects, is to pay our quotas. This means that we could rapidly move in a very distressing direction.

Recently an article in *The Banner* warned against our becoming congregational, agreeing in our differences to live and let live, arguing instead that we all ought to have women deacons. Equal to our danger of becoming congregational is that of our becoming hierarchical. The synod is supposed to be a delegated assembly of the churches; it is the churches coming together for self-government. It is to represent the churches; when it doesn't it is in danger of becoming hierarchical, and not Reformed. Doesn't that danger of

developing hierarchy appear when a pre-advice committee does not reflect the mind of the church? It is reported that the 1985 pre-advice committee which is to handle protests and appeals is not representative of the churches. One third of the classes have protested or overtured against the action of 1984, and more than half of the classes have taken some kind of action toward exploration of what the 1984 decision means. But apparently, on the pre-advice committee there is no minister and there is only one elder who opposes that decision. Is that representative? Is that giving a genuine voice to the classes and the numerous congregations that have protested? That looks like hierarchy and a sign of our drift from our Reformed heritage.

Confessional Renewal

4. The three directions in which our church could go, of splitting, of living and letting live, or of progressive Liberalism, are not our only options. A fourth option is a renewal of our confessional orthodoxy, a restoration of our Reformed heritage. Reformed friends in our dear church tell me that we do have a conservative majority. I don't like the word "conservative," just as I don't like to call those who differ "Liberals." I prefer to call us "Reformed" and them "innovators." (They may not like that either, but it is a little more accurate. They are not historic Liberals. They do not deny the resurrection of Jesus Christ. But they are not genuinely Reformed either. They are innovators.) The fourth option is the hope that our Reformed, orthodox, confessional heritage, our commitment to the Scriptures, can be renewed. That happened in the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod in which there was a renewal of orthodox leadership in the church. (It is not easy to think of other examples in which that happened.) What we tonight must take very seriously is the fact that this happened in the Lutheran Missouri Synod because there were strong leaders who had an institutional base of power and influence from which to operate that gave leadership to the orthodox cause. We have to think about leadership of the Reformed cause in the Christian Reformed church. We have to think about institutional bases for that leadership if we are to have a realistic hope of a renewal of orthodoxy among us. We must pray, study, organize, and live out our faith.

A real antidote to our plight is offered to us in Hebrew 2:1. "Therefore we must pay the closer attention." The antidote to drifting or sliding away, is to pay closer attention to where we have been and to where we ought to be. That is what God calls us to do. We must always begin with ourselves. We must be sure that our own houses are in order before we put the houses of others in order. Recall the words of our Lord to the Sadducees in Matt. 22:29, "You are wrong, because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God." I think that we as Reformed people in our churches know the Scriptures, but I think that we must be sure that we are manifesting the power of God in our lives—in our church lives. One of the most effective ways to revitalize orthodoxy will be to demonstrate in orthodox congregations the power of the orthodox Faith at work. I have known home missionaries who have gone out in that orthodox Reformed confidence and who have been amazed at what God has done through the faithful preaching of the Reformed Faith and through real covenant community life. We need to show how God works through the knowledge of His Scriptures. And we have to appeal to the innovators among us to return to

the Scriptures and be faithful to them. We cannot have the power of God to the lasting good of the church if it is separated from the Scriptures. Psalm 119:24 says, "Thy testimonies are my delight; they are my counsellors." We have to call our whole church to renewal by taking delight in the Word of God—delight in studying, in preaching, in hearing and in obeying the Word of God. That is how we will see renewal.

The synod of 1985 will meet in this room. I do not think that our church is as far gone as the Presbyterian General Assembly was when it met some sixty years ago. We do not, in the Providence of God, know what developments may come and what the condition of our churches may be five or ten or twenty years from now. The Lord calls us to be faithful now, to pray for the synod, that we support it by our prayers, by our study, by our efforts to open the Word to delegates to the synod, that they may serve the Lord, manifesting their knowledge of the Scripture and power of God. This is not a time for us to be either apathetic or despairing, but it is a time to be faithful. Machen in his book *Christianity and Liberalism* said, "God has always saved the church, but He has always saved it not by theological pacifists, but by sturdy contenders for the Truth." That is what we need to be. We must go forward in the confidence of the Lord's promise in Psalm 119:165, "Great peace have those who love thy law; nothing can make them stumble." May God grant to us in this time of uncertainty and church drift, that we might be people who have great peace because we know, treasure and keep God's Word so that nothing may make us stumble. ●

ANNOUNCEMENT!

The annual meeting
of the
Reformed Fellowship is
scheduled for
October 10, 1985
at the
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Hamilton Conference on Faith and Practice

Harry J. Kwantes

"*Orthodoxy and Orthopraxis in the Reformed Community Today*" was the theme of a Conference hosted by Redeemer College in Hamilton, Ontario, May 30 to June 1, 1985. The Conference faced the question, "Is there a shift from understanding Christian truth in terms of doctrine (orthodoxy) to truth as right moral and social action (orthopraxis)?" There were six addresses on subjects related to that theme, and a respondent to each of the six speakers. Opportunity was given after each address for questions from the conferees, an opportunity which was often used to give little "speeches." As the Conference progressed the critical significance of the issues came into sharper focus and this was reflected also in the atmosphere of the meetings.

Some 150–200 people were welcomed to the Conference by Rev. Henry DeBolster, President of Redeemer College, who based his introductory remarks on I Corinthians 13.

The first speaker, Dr. John Cooper, Associate Professor of Philosophy at Calvin College, spoke on the subject "The Changing Face of Truth." Contributing factors to the tension and polarization that exist in our church are different concepts of the nature of truth itself. The speaker cited theological and ecclesiastical objections to the traditional concept of truth, and explained various theories about truth. The position espoused by "God Met ons" (God With Us) in the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland, was described as a rejection of the traditional view of truth, and replacement of it with a relational theory of truth—"there is no objective truth;" "truth is not located in the text of Scripture, or to what the text refers, but in the event of the text;" "truth always occurs in relationship of man with something else." The speaker asserted that orthodoxy is primary to and basic for orthopraxis, and called us back to Biblical realism—the view that truth emanates from Scripture. The Bible reveals factual truth which must be accepted.

Rev. Philip Holtrop, Assistant Professor of Religion and Theology at Calvin College, criticized Dr. Cooper's paper as a "philosophical paper," based on philosophy rather than on the Bible and the Reformation; as "canonizing" a "traditional" view; as lacking historical and Biblical sensitivity; and all tending toward reductionism, abstraction, and latent "ego-centrism." The respondent described "God Met Ons" as getting at something powerfully important, namely: God calls men to action. He asserted that the relational view of truth ought to be maintained to re-affirm covenantal fidelity.

Dr. John Van Dyk, Professor of Philosophy at Dort College, addressed the Conference on the subject "The Problem of Conflict and Forbearance in the Earlier Church and Today." Historical, systematic, and practical considerations were presented—What happened? What can be learned? And, what can we do? The speaker traced the attitudes of tolerance and intolerance in the history of the church, showing how the intellectualization of doctrine, the institutionalization of the church, and a growing loss of Kingdom vision made for changes in the expression of tolerance and intolerance. There is a two-fold character of the Gospel—it is complete and unfolding—which must be recognized. A number of factors must be taken into account when one deals with tolerance and/or intolerance. The speaker answered "No" to the question "Learning to live in the bond of unity—can it be done?" The history of the Christian church is one long history of conflict and polarization. Yet we must exercise patience and forbearance in the way of repentance for self-will. We must provide greater leadership, Christian education on all levels must teach greater skill in conflict resolution, and we must work out a Biblical perspective on truth, and learn to avoid unbiblical accommodation to pagan systems.

Dr. James Payton, Pastor of the Stratford CRC criticized Dr. Van Dyk's paper for failing to define "heresy," com-



mented about the attitude of tolerance and intolerance in the Apostolic Church, warned that a heresy-hunting mentality destroys the ability to recognize heresy, and observed that in the face of change we must differentiate carefully between normative and peripheral matters.

"Confessing the Reformed Faith Today" was the theme of the address of Dr. Gordon Spykman, Professor of Religion and Theology at Calvin College. The speaker identified secularism as the overwhelming crisis of our time, as the matrix of modern life and culture, a life and culture in which the church is no longer a dominant majority in any locale. Dr. Spykman asserted that the "Contemporary Testimony" is a radical attack upon the spirit of secularism and explained and defended the document as a means to heal the polarization evident in our church.

Dr. Fred Klooster, Professor of Systematic Theology at Calvin Theological Seminary, the respondent, indicated considerable agreement with the "Contemporary Testimony," but questioned whether the "Contemporary Testimony" is more helpful than our present Creeds in answering the crises of the day, and challenged the Contemporary Testimony Committee to define secularism. The respondent questioned whether the "Contemporary Testimony" is adequate, and wondered whether our people are aware of the crises facing us today.

The speaker for the last session of Friday afternoon was Dr. Henry Vander Goot, Professor of Religion and Theology at Calvin College, who addressed us on the subject "Why Apartheid is Not a Heresy." The speaker discussed the decision of the CRC 1984 Synod on Apartheid, tracing the background for the decision, the work of the Interchurch Relations Committee, and the significance of this act of Synod. The decision shows a shift from basing judgment in the church on orthodoxy to basing it on so-called orthopraxis. Dr. Vander Goot declared that latent, unformulated falsifications of Biblical revelation, whether in the form of teachings or practices, though deplorable, are not heresies. Wife-beating for example, is wrong, but that is not a "heresy." Heresy is explicit, formal, culpable, and legal falsification of the Creeds of the institutional church. The decision to declare Apartheid "heresy" violates Reformed ecclesiology and the Reformed view of the Christian witness in the social order.

The respondent, Dr. Paul Schrotenboer, General Secretary of the Reformed Ecumenical Synod, asserted that a church's defense of Apartheid is heresy, and added that the situation in the church of South Africa met the conditions for the declaration of heresy on the part of our church.

Friday evening Rev. Nelson Kloosterman, Associate Professor of New Testament and Ethics at Mid-America Reformed Seminary, spoke on the subject: "The 'Women in Office Issue': How Crucial Is It?" The speaker centered his address on three "dogmas" or convictions, namely: Scripture, Equality, and Ecclesiastical Office; and described the views of opponents to and advocates for women in ecclesiastical office on each of the above, showing basic differences in viewpoint. Rev. Kloosterman also elaborated on the problematic matter of ministers being excused for conscience reasons from participating in the ordination of women and the implications of one of the Classes' appeals to Synod 1985 regarding pastors' participation in the ordination of women. The speaker asserted that the decision of Synod 1984 greatly increased polarization in the church and that the Biblical warrant for the diaconate should be studied.

The respondent, Dr. George Vander Velde, Senior Member in Theology at the Toronto Institute for Christian Studies, criticized Rev. Kloosterman's paper for not addressing the question of the relation of the general office of believer to the special offices, and raised the question of the extent of tolerance in our church.

The Saturday morning speaker was Dr. John Bolt, Assistant Professor of Religion and Theology at Redeemer College. His theme was "Liberating Secession or Lamentable Schism: Can a Reformed Church be both 'Catholic' and 'True'?" The speaker discussed the meaning of the words "conservative" and "liberal," and concluded that the answer to the question: "Are those terms adequately descriptive of the polarization in the CRC?" is a qualified "No." It is possible to be both theologically conservative and socially/politically liberal, and vice versa. Dr. Bolt mentioned various descriptions of "parties" within the CRC, and asserted that theological liberalism is not a great danger in the CRC although some leaders in the church are attracted to social and political liberalism. The speaker maintained that we must live with the tension between "catholicity" and "truth;" the alternative is unacceptable. Secession from the church by confessional, doctrinal conservatives would be lamentable both for the church and for those seceding. We must be both "Catholic" and "True," and recognize and correct the fact that "conservatives" in our church are by and large silenced by the present leadership in the CRC.

The respondent, Rev. Raymond Sikkema, pastor of Mount Hamilton CRC, questioned Dr. Bolt's contention that we must live with the tension "catholicity" and "truth," and the description of "conservative" and "liberal." True catholicity is present only when the church stands on the truth of the infallibly inspired Word of God. There may not be a tension between "catholicity" and "truth," or between orthodoxy and orthopraxis. Rev. Sikkema asserted that we must build on the foundation Jesus Christ, and reminded us of the Savior's words "because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am about to spit you out of my mouth" (Revelation 3:16).

Dr. John Hulst, President, Dordt College, "wrapped up" the Conference by calling for pastoral concern for the people of God, humility on the part of the leaders in the church, and a common obedience for and obedience to the Word of God. According to Dr. Hulst the Conference gave evidence of the autithetical thinking present in our church today; "God Met Ours" violates orthodoxy. Orthodoxy and orthopraxis may not be pitted against each other.

The undersigned found it no easy task to adequately report on the Conference in a brief article. The addresses were substantive and thought-provoking. The outlines of the addresses provided by some of the speakers were much appreciated. We trust we have been fair in presenting the expressed views of the speakers and of the respondents.

We commend Dr. John Bolt and Redeemer College for organizing and hosting the Conference. We hope it will not be the last one. One matter which struck us forcefully was the evidence of and the extent of the polarization in our church. It is our conviction that at its heart is the question of the authority and the *interpretation of Scripture*. That matter would be a most appropriate subject for a next conference.

Rev. Harry Kwantes is the pastor of the Godwin Heights C.R. Church of Grand Rapids, Mich.

CHRISTIAN REFORMED SYNOD OF 1985

Arthur Besteman

The Synod was convened this year by the consistory of the First Christian Reformed Church of Jenison, Michigan, where on the evening preceding the beginning of synod a service of prayer was held. The service was well attended and was marked by a spirit of reverence and praise.

The pastor of the First Jenison Church conducted the opening devotions of the first session of synod on Tuesday morning, June 11. The delegates proceeded to the election of officers. The Reverend Calvin Bolt, pastor of the 12th Avenue Church of Jenison was elected president on the second ballot. On succeeding ballots the Reverend Peter Brouwer, pastor of the First Church of Edgerton, Minnesota was elected vice-president, the Reverend William Buursma, pastor of the Third Church of Kalamazoo, Michigan was elected first clerk and the Reverend Jack Westerhof, pastor of the Willowdale Church of Toronto, Ontario, was elected second clerk.

It is always an impressive moment when the delegates to synod are requested to arise to indicate their agreement with the three forms of unity. The delegates were then dismissed to begin their work in the various advisory committees which had been appointed by the officers of the preceding synod and the stated clerk of the denomination. The men who make committee appointments exercise a great deal of power and can often influence the outcome of the dealing with issues which the synod considers. This year there had been much concern in regard to the composition of the committee which was to study the fifty-plus overtures and appeals against the 1984 decision which opened the office of deacon to women. An attempt from the floor to add two members who were known to support the historic position allowing only men in the offices of the church was defeated by a vote of 88 to 71.

Liturgy Committee

Wednesday, June 12

Much of this day was spent in committee work. It is here that the delegates often exercise their greatest influence. A decision which may have far reaching consequences was, however, taken on this day. Synod approved the plan of the Board of Publications by which the Liturgical Committee ceased to be a standing committee of synod and became a standing committee of the Board of Publications. Membership on the committee will be determined by the Board of Publications. Thus a committee which deals with a very important part of the church's life which is directly under the supervision of the elders in the local church will now be determined by an agency of synod rather than by synod itself. Along with this decision, synod also adopted a recommendation making the position of music and liturgy editor a continuing position with the Education Department of the Board

of Publications. Another executive position has been created. It will be interesting to observe how long it will take before an assistant is needed.

De Wachter

Synod also took note on this day that the final issue of *De Wachter* will be published on December 31, 1985. After 118 years of existence it now has less than two thousand subscribers. The first clerk of synod had prepared a beautiful tribute to *De Wachter* which he read on behalf of synod. The present editor, Dr. Sierd Woudstra, responded.

Candidates for Ministry

Thursday, June 13

Synod concerned itself on this day with the declaration of candidacy of forty-one young men for the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church. Each delegate is confronted with a statement of faith and a declaration as to why he desires to enter the ministry. As the delegates dealt with this material and sought the answers to various questions which arose from the written material, this reporter became more convinced of the mistake that was made when the examination of candidates was removed from synod and assigned to an agency of the church. Synod may save time assigning the examination to someone else but it removes from the delegates the opportunity to question the candidates and to hear personally from them what they believe and what they propose to do.

These candidates and their families were presented to synod later in the week and appropriately addressed by the president of synod. A brief litany was read, a prayer of thanksgiving was offered and the delegates and visitors present arose to sing all the stanzas of "God of the Prophets." May these young men go forth indeed as prophets to proclaim the Word of the Lord. May they be blessed and may they be caused to be a blessing.

Synod interviewed Dr. Raymond Van Leeuwen who has been teaching at Calvin College and who was being recommended to succeed Dr. Martin Woudstra who is retiring from Calvin Seminary as professor of Old Testament. An interview was also conducted with Dr. John Cooper, another member of the college faculty who was being recommended to occupy the chair in the seminary vacated by Dr. Henry Stob several years ago. Both men gave a good account of themselves and were elected by synod to serve in the seminary. It is a matter of concern that neither man has had pastoral experience and so the number of faculty members in the seminary who have never served a church or whose experience in the pastorate is of very brief duration continues to grow.

The delegates authorized the Board of World Missions to expand its ministry to the Dominican Republic into adjoining Haiti. Synod's president observed, "I find this one of the exciting times to be at synod." And such it was.

Psalter-Hymnal

Synod began its review of "Proposed Hymns and Bible Songs" which are being recommended for inclusion in the new *Psalter Hymnal* which has been in preparation since the appointment of a revision committee in 1977. Next year the section on the Psalms will be presented for approval. Synod was assisted in its review of the new material by Dr. Emily Brink, Dr. Harvey Smit and Rev. Jack Reiffer. Much time was spent during the sessions of synod either listening to new tunes being played or in singing new texts. The committee has done much work. Not all will appreciate what is being recommended. The members of the committee were very receptive to comments and suggestions.

Volunteer Resource Bank

Friday, June 14

The Volunteer Resource Bank was established by the Synod of 1979 with the mandate to encourage volunteerism within the Christian Reformed Church and to coordinate the services of volunteers with needs of denominational boards and agencies. The VRB has rendered a valuable service but came now with the request for a full-time director plus support personnel and a growing budget. Synod chose not to grant the request but rather dismissed the committee and encouraged the growth of volunteerism on the local level. *The church was spared the establishment of another agency with its attendant administrative and office staff.*

Use of the Lot

Classis Central California noting the growing use of the lot in the selection of elders and deacons requested synod to provide guidelines thereby legitimatizing the use of the lot. In the discussion appeal was made to Acts 1 and the use of the lot in selecting a successor to Judas. It was the Reverend Paul Redhouse who reminded the delegates that the only use of the lot mentioned in the New Testament occurred before Pentecost. Synod did not accede to the request but the strong feeling on the part of some for the use of the lot prevailed and there was an attempt to interpret synod's decision to mean that those who are using the lot may continue to do so.

Friday afternoon the Reverend Harold Bode presented representatives of the sixty military, industrial and institutional chaplains who serve in the name of the church.

World Missions

Dr. Eugene Rubingh in presenting the world missionaries who were present reminded the delegates that there are three hundred missionaries working in twenty-three countries. There are over one hundred twenty preaching stations among the Haitian cane cutters in the Dominican Republic. Twenty thousand baptisms were performed in Nigeria last year. Three hundred fifty thousand souls gather for worship among the churches with whom we work in Nigeria. The church in China today is thirty times larger than it was in 1950 when our missionaries were forced to leave. So we were reminded that the Lord is carrying on the work of His church and in that work He is pleased to use the Christian Reformed Church. May we be faithful to the task which He has assigned to us.

Concurrent Synods

The joint Christian Reformed-Reformed Church in America Committee proposed *concurrent synodical meetings*. Synod adopted the proposal and invited the Reformed Church to hold its 1989 synod on the campus of Calvin College at the same time our synod meets. A joint committee will plan mutual worship, opportunities for the exchange of ideas and for fellowship. Synod also approved a joint work in Bangladesh for one year.

Banner Editorial Policy

Saturday, June 15

Classis Florida without a dissenting vote had adopted an overture requesting of "the Rev. Andrew Kuyvenhoven, editor of *The Banner*, according to the terms of the Form of Subscription, a further explanation of his understanding of the Confession of Faith, Articles V and VII" in view of what the editor had written in the January 23, 1984 issue of *The Banner*. It should be noted that Classis Florida was *not bringing charges but was rather asking for further explanation*. Synod became involved in a discussion of proper procedure and *never faced the issue raised by the overture*. The overture was quickly declared out of order and so another matter that has caused unrest in the church was swept under the carpet.

South Africa

A discussion highly charged with emotion which was to consume approximately nine hours of synod's time began on Saturday. Voices including that of SCORR had been raised asking for severance of ecclesiastical relationship with the Reformed Church of South Africa. Here was an instance where synod was not swayed by the lengthy, inflammatory speeches of several delegates who lost all consciousness of time as they spoke. Many were rather influenced by the reasoned speeches of the Rev. Ezekiel Mataboge and Dr. Victor d'Assonville, fraternal delegates from South Africa who both pleaded for continued dialogue. Rev. Mataboge said, "Three times, I say, please let us talk, don't isolate us." Synod finally decided to continue our ecclesiastical relationship with this church of 150,000 members of whom 50,000 are black with the note that the relationship will be reviewed in 1989.

Monday, June 17

On Monday afternoon Dr. Joel Nederhood addressed synod on behalf of the Back to God Hour whose radio ministry continues to grow. Dr. Nederhood was congratulated as he *completed twenty-five years of service* with our denomination's radio ministry.

Rev. Louis Tamminga was reappointed as Director of Pastor-Church Relations Services. The committee's request for a committee to study the church's calling system was also adopted although not without considerable discussion. Members of the new committee are: Rev. W. Buursma, Rev. L. Dykstra, Rev. R.C. De Vries, Mr. Fred Visser, Mrs. Carol Van Drunen and Rev. L. Hofman.

The new translation of the Canons of Dordt was referred to the churches for study and reaction with final approval to be sought at the synod of 1986.

World Missions and Relief Organization

Monday evening saw the beginning of the discussion of the report submitted by the "great commission" as it had

come to be known. The 1982 synod had appointed a five member ad hoc committee to study the relationship between the Christian Reformed Board of World Missions and the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee and to seek for an easing of tension between these two agencies and their personnel as they carry on their work. The members of the committee are Rev. H. Dekker, Mr. G. Berghoef, Mr. N. De Graaf, Dr. J. Kromminga and Dr. W. Spoelhof. Mr. Gerard Berghoef, a member of the "commission," had submitted a minority report in which he indicated agreement with the plan of reorganization, but differed in regard to "principles, guidelines, and mandates" proposed by the majority. Mr. Berghoef wrote, "Therefore, synod must lay down guidelines so precise, and so clear, that both board and agencies will immediately recognize the priority of the Word preached in creating faith and the role of the deed in authenticating that proclamation. This perspective of unity, diversity, and priority is the key to a harmonious relation in the future." The need for the emphasis of the minority report was demonstrated clearly when the chairman of the commission in response to a question concerning what was meant by the centrality of the official proclamation of the word responded by saying that it must be understood that *included in the official proclamation of the word is not only the preaching of the Word by the minister but also the benevolent deeds performed by the deacons*. Synod adjourned and returned to this matter on Wednesday.

Racial Pastors' Training

Tuesday, June 18

Much time was spent on Tuesday discussing educational requirements for new pastors from multi-racial groups. The church has always insisted on maintaining high educational standards for her clergy called to proclaim the Word of God. That is now changing. As a news release stated, "Entrance and degree requirements at Calvin Seminary were changed, procedures for ordination into the Christian Reformed Church were modified and continuing education tracks for Asians, Blacks, Hispanics and Native Americans were approved." As one delegate observed, he was against it because no provisions had been made for Frisians. Students from multi-racial groups may now be licensed for all pastoral duties, including preaching and the administration of the sacraments, when they have completed half of their seminary requirements. One wonders what concessions will be sought next.

Wednesday, June 19

Wednesday was an especially busy day. The morning session was devoted to a continued discussion of the report of the commission on world missions and world relief. The motion to establish a single Board of World Ministries was adopted by a vote of 82 to 73. This board composed of twenty members all elected by synod will regulate and supervise the work of world missions and world relief. There will also be two committees of the board, the World Missions Committee and the World Relief Committee each consisting of one representative from each classis, elected by classis and confirmed by synod. Synod established the position of executive director of world ministries. The closeness of the vote confirms the fact that many questions and reservations remain in regard to the *establishment of a "super board."* One cannot help but wonder if more could have been accomplished to bring harmony by listening to and adopting the principle

enunciated by the minority report of the commission. The church's work must go on. The prayers of the church are needed.

Women in Office

Wednesday afternoon witnessed the beginning of the discussion of an issue which was foremost in the minds of many throughout the denomination, namely the women in office matter. Over fifty overtures, protests and appeals had been submitted in regard to the decision of the synod of 1984 which opened the office of deacon to women. The advisory committee dealing with this matter came with a majority report and two minority reports. The following decisions of the majority report were adopted:

1. That synod not sustain the protests and appeals which had been submitted.
2. That synod declare that the biblical "Headship Principle" as formulated by the Synod of 1984, namely, "That the man should exercise primary leadership and direction setting in the home and in the church" implies that only male members of the church shall be admitted to the offices of minister and elder.
3. That synod declare that the decision of 1984 "That pastors are not expected to participate in the ordination of women if it is against their conscience" be declared in conflict with articles 13 and 24 of the Church Order.
4. That synod request the officers of synod to write a pastoral letter dealing with the effects of the 1984 decision in regard to women in office. The letter is to be sent to consistories and congregations.

One of the minority reports signed by a minister and two elders recommended that synod declare that only confessing male members of the church who meet the biblical requirements for office-bearers are eligible for the office of deacon. The second minority report signed by one elder supported the majority position except for its statement that women are barred from the offices of elder and minister and also requested that the "conscience clause" not be dropped.

Much could be written about the matter. It is difficult to understand how communications from thirteen classes and so many consistories could be so easily set aside, especially when so many of them included careful studies of the Scriptures and of the Confessions. As one observer of synod commented, "It was disturbing that so little time was devoted on the floor of synod to a study of what the Bible has to say about the matter." One delegate eloquently expressed the burden of many at synod and throughout the church when he asked, "Where do we go now?" The applause from the audience which was quickly ruled out of order spoke volumes. Later after synod had decided that the position of "adjunct office-bearer" is contrary to the law and spirit of the church order the question was again painfully asked, "Where do we go now?" This reporter could not help but reflect upon the hurt and pain that is caused when a church is no longer united in her view of Scripture and its authority within the church.

Role of Deacons

Thursday, June 20

A decision was made to appoint a study committee which will determine the authority and functions of elders and deacons, and their inter-relationships in the assemblies of the church, addressing these specific matters:

1. Define the work of elders and deacons in such fashion that the local churches will be assisted in carrying out the decision of Synod 1984, that "the work of women as deacons is to be distinguished from that of elders."
2. Address the question of delegating deacons to the assemblies of the church.
3. Recommend such changes in the church order as are necessary to implement the findings and recommendations of the study committee.

The results of this committee's study will be significant also in regard to the women in office issue so it ought to be watched carefully. The members of the committee are: Dr. J. De Jonge, Dr. R. De Ridder, Rev. N. Kloosterman, Rev. J. Nutma, Mr. J. Van Groningen, Mrs. Eunice Vanderlaan, Mr. J. Lane and Rev. H. Samplonius. The attempt from the floor to remove one name because his presence would cause "polarization" failed.

Liturgical Dance

The church had been confronted with a recommendation that congregations be allowed to introduce and make use of the liturgical dance in the worship service. A colleague commented that the poverty of the report was indicated by the weakness of the arguments to which the committee resorted in seeking to support its case. It was fortunate that in spite of the committee's effort to support its report little time was devoted to it. It was received as information and referred to the churches where it ought to experience a hasty demise. The tragedy as one delegate observed is that "The churches that are practicing it will continue to do so." One can't help but wonder if its practice is indicative of what seems to be a growing lack of confidence in the power of the preached Word.

Belgic Confession

Synod approved the new translation of the Belgic Confession which is the result of eight years of work by the committee. The committee had made a significant change in article 30 which at present uses the word "men" in a paragraph dealing with the offices of the church. The Committee's recommendation to use the phrase "faithful persons" was adopted. A committee of two elders had prepared a minority report asking for the continued use of the word "men." They ably defended their position but their report went down in defeat.

Denominational Student Fund

The Board of Trustees of Calvin Seminary recommended to synod the establishment of a denominational student aid fund which would replace the student funds on the classical level. This recommendation was referred to the churches and particularly to the classes for reflection and evaluation. There is definitely a danger present here. *The classis would be deprived of control over the money which its churches give for the support of men preparing for the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church. Who knows what the money would be used for if control is placed on a denominational level?*

Building Expansion

Thursday night synod gave approval for an addition to the denominational building in Grand Rapids which will cost 3.5 million dollars. The purchase of office and warehouse space

in Canada to cost no more than \$500,000 was also approved. As administrative personnel and support persons grow in number the need for more offices also increases. It was much easier to get quota support for a building than it was for the support of the men and women who carry on the work of the church on the various mission fields of the world.

Finances

Friday, June 21

Friday was devoted to a discussion of the report of the committee dealing with finances. The committee was very conscious of the fact that there is economic hardship in various parts of the church and that a growing number of our churches are not meeting the quota requests for 1985. The committee's recommendation that *quota increases be restricted to 4.5% was adopted*. The 1985 quota is \$381.05, the 1986 quota request will be \$398.05 plus the \$4.50 which was approved for the denominational building project.

Efforts to secure *more detailed information* in regard to *salaries of denominational executives* were once again *frustrated*. It is a sensitive area but the speculation which now exists cannot be healthy for the church and her continued financial support.

Conclusions

As I reflect upon Synod 1985 various thoughts come to mind.

1. It was marked by *good leadership*. The officers fulfilled their responsibilities capably and as Christian gentleman. The president informed the delegates that he had prayed each day that he might be fair. That prayer was answered.
2. It was a synod marked by *active participation* on the part of the *elders*. The elders both in committee and on the floor of synod are becoming increasingly articulate.
3. I was encouraged especially in the advisory committee meetings of which I was a part to observe the concern to *appeal* for support to the *Scriptures*, the *Confessions* and the *Church Order*.
4. As synod entered into the discussion of the reports of her deputies and found difficulty in some instances to understand what they had done, or to concur with their decisions, I was reminded of the importance of the work of these men and the importance of their *knowing the Church Order* and having the courage to act in accord with it.
5. It became apparent to this delegate that *decisions often are not based on principle but on emotional appeal*. Synod is not of a mind anymore to enter into substantive discussions and debates.
6. It becomes increasingly evident that the *church is no longer united*. One heard the comment made again and again that we have to work to keep the church together.

Synod 1985 is past. Her decisions remain. The president of synod in his closing remarks used the words of his father to exhort the delegates "to love the church." Many members of the church will find that increasingly difficult to do because of some of the decisions that were made at the synod of 1985. The decisions which are difficult to accept ought not to precipitate hasty action but ought rather to call for searching of heart and earnest intercession as to how "reform" can best be brought to the church.

LOT, THE MAN WHO VEXED HIS OWN SOUL

The Man God Did Not Use

William E. Hill, Jr.

A U.P.U.S.A. MINISTER said to me one day just after the '67 *Confession* had been adopted, "I don't like it, but I can live with it." Four thousand years ago in Sodom, a good man by the name of Lot also said to himself, "I don't like what goes on here, but I can live with it." The Bible tells us that "Lot vexed his righteous soul" over the sins of Sodom. But why would Lot want to live with it when he could just as easily be elsewhere and not have to "vex his righteous soul" with the sins of his neighbors. No doubt, Lot said to himself, "Sodom is a wicked city—Sodom is an unbelieving city—perhaps I can do something to help these people of Sodom. Perhaps I can witness to them! Maybe I can change Sodom."

Mixed Motives

Actually, however, Lot's real reasons for being in Sodom were different from these which he gave to himself. Lot was in Sodom in order to make a living. He wanted to make a good living and he saw that he could do it in Sodom. That's the reason he went there and that is the reason he stayed.

Lot's purpose in being in Sodom, also, was to enjoy the good things of civilization. He didn't like being separated from them. He had left Ur of the Chaldees with his Uncle Abraham when he was a young man. He missed all of the conveniences and pleasures of civilization. He had seen possibilities in being with his Uncle Abraham and had prospered out in the wide open spaces. But still he craved the pleasures, benefits and social contacts of civilization.

Lot was in Sodom, too, because he wanted not only a living, but wealth. He was in Sodom and he was going to have his part of it. Just making a living wasn't satisfying to him. He wanted to make a killing. He knew that Sodom was the place to do it.

In the fourth place, Lot went to Sodom because he wanted to rise on the ladder of success, to become prominent, to become well-known, to become a leader. This he could not do out in the wide open spaces. His Uncle Abraham delighted more in communion with God than in attaining success and becoming powerful. Not Lot. It was all right to communicate with God and in wicked Sodom he could do that, he said to himself. Why not enjoy communion with God here since God was anywhere and you could worship as well in the atmosphere of Sodom as out in the wide open spaces. So "Lot chose Sodom." Though the sins of his neighbors vexed him greatly, he stuck with Sodom. He was the kind of man who said, "I don't like it, but I can live with it." In spite of the wickedness of his neighbors, he went on living with it.

"In the World, But Not of It"

Now this is something which every missionary has to do, but he is doing it for a different purpose. He is not doing it to make a living. He is not doing it to make a killing. He is not doing it to enjoy the benefits of civilization, nor to rise high on the ladder of success. He is doing it to bring Christ to people who are in darkness, to obey his Lord's command, so he, too, has to "Vex his righteous soul" with the wickedness around him. His main business is, however, to replace that wickedness with righteousness rather than to make money or to make a success out of it for himself.

A true Christian today works out in the world, has to face a degree of the same thing that Lot had to face. Oftentimes his righteous soul is vexed by things that are done on the job and among his neighbors. But if he is a dedicated Christian, he is not there to make a living, not there to make a killing, not there to find success, not there to get the gadgets and comforts of life. A true, witnessing Christian seeks to bring Christ to others wherever he is and to turn wickedness into righteousness wherever he goes. He is there because he

feels God has placed him there to do a job. Lot had no such motive, at least judging from all the indications that are given to us in Scripture. While he maintained his integrity, did not join in with the wickedness of his neighbors and was very much upset by what they did, yet his witness to them, if there was any, was not effective because they knew that his main reasons for being in Sodom were the same reasons that they had for being in Sodom. So they were not impressed by his righteousness or his religion.

"Lot Lingered"

There came a time when Lot had to leave Sodom, but he did not leave very willingly, only reluctantly. His wife left more reluctantly. When Lot left Sodom, she would not look toward the Lord. She looked toward Sodom, just as Lot had led her to do in his original decision. And though she got out of Sodom, she perished with Sodom because her heart was there. Lot's children, also, most of them, perished in Sodom where they had, no doubt, learned the wickedness of the Sodomites and had participated fully in the wicked life of that wicked city. They had no idea of leaving. Even when they had a chance, most of them scoffed at it, with the exception of the two daughters, who, though they left, had become so thoroughly brainwashed in the wickedness of Sodom, that they still acted like Sodomites.

Such is the price that a man pays when he sets his heart on the wrong things, even when he sets his heart on ANYTHING except the righteousness of God.

"Get out!" But Lot Lingered

When a man finds himself in the midst of a wicked, unbelieving atmosphere, sometimes God comes to him and says, "The time has come for you to leave. This thing has gotten too rotten. You no longer have a mission here." "But," a man says, "my investments are here, my home is here, my friends are here." God says, "Go." The attachments, however, blind him, and his roots run too deep, so he rationalizes. He still clings to the delusion that he can do some good there. Even though God says "Go," he hesitates.

Increasingly, today, Christians and particularly ministers, are faced with such a crisis. The organized church is becoming more and more corrupt. In many of our major denominations much of the leadership is in the hands of unbelievers. Lies of Satan are being propagated from pulpits. They are being taught in the colleges and seminaries. People of God are being brainwashed with the propaganda of Satan. There comes a time when God is saying to a man, "Get out!" Sometimes the man's hesitancy arises not out of concern for his witness within, but out of minor concerns such as, how can I get along in my old age without my annuity. How will I get along in a strange denomination? Suppose I can't get a church? All the prestige I have built up in my ministry will be lost. Some of my best friends will turn against me, I'll be called a fool, a fanatic. Finally, he reasons, maybe after all the situation is not hopeless. Maybe Sodom will change. Maybe things will be better a little later. Is this really the right time to be making a move? So he hesitates. As these things loom a little too largely in his thinking, like Lot, he "lingers!"

It is hard to make a break. It was hard for Abraham to pick up and leave Ur of the Chaldees with all of the comforts and security that he enjoyed there to go out "not knowing where he went." It was hard for Saul of Tarsus to leave

the comforts, prestige and power of his position as a Jewish Rabbi, launch out in a despised sect, to be persecuted from city to city, to suffer all kinds of indignities and slander, to be deserted by his friends. God said "Go," and he went.

Perhaps Lot might have even reasoned, I'll stick here until they kick me out. If they kick me out, then I'll have to go. Until then, I'll stay." So he stayed on and "vexed his righteous soul," made his own witness ineffective and ruined his family. A man's family does not come first, but a man ought to consider what happens to his family if he stays where he is. Lot vexed his soul, but he did nothing about it. Many good men will sit by and say, "I don't like it but I can live with it. It is not for us to judge. At least we can stay." It just could be, such men will wake up one day to realize the price they have paid, in their own families and the sheep God has given them to tend, to say nothing of the little lambs coming on, is too great.

Future Generations at Stake

When we say, "I don't like it, but I can live with it," and we stay in a church that is blaspheming the name of God and continually mouthing the talk of Satan, we may be doing irreparable damage to our own children, our own congregations and to their children. The great danger is that we get increasingly accustomed to unbelief and sin until it no longer stirs our righteous indignation. Something dead smells and the longer it stays, the worse it smells. But if you stay around it long enough, you can get to the place where you don't smell it at all. We'll "deplore." We'll "regret." We'll say we don't like it, but still we stick with it. This is what Lot did.

A Choice

Compare for a moment the situation of Abraham and the situation of Lot. Abraham chose communion with God. Lot chose money, prestige, power, the comforts of civilization and approval. Abraham stayed in fellowship with God. The blessing of God went down from generation to generation to his descendants to bless the whole world. Lot, indeed, "vexed his righteous soul," but he stayed with Sodom. And in the end, his household was lost in shame and ignominy. Most perished, two girls lived to curse the world with their bastard seed.

Do we not today need to take solemn warning from this tragic example of a good man who lived in the midst of wickedness because it was profitable to him, kidding himself into thinking he was doing some good? He didn't even change ten souls in Sodom! There is a lot of loose talk about going out into the world and being "one of them." This needs to be qualified! Lot tried it and lost his family without winning even ten men in Sodom!

Let us beware that in this day when Sodom is all about us, when Sodom is infiltrating the church, when Sodom is even being brought into the church by church leaders, when Sodom has the control of many church organizations and even whole denominations, we dare not make Lot's mistake of saying, "I don't like it, but I can live with it." Let every minister, every dedicated Christian face in his or her own heart the question, "Why am I where I am? Am I bearing effective witness for Jesus Christ or am I here for some other reason or purpose? Is my Christian witness being muted by my compromise in *being where I am*?"

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Battle of Faith Among Our Larger Neighbors

Peter De Jong

What Harold Lindsell aptly called "the battle for the Bible" continues on many fronts. Preoccupied as many of us are tempted to be with its ominous developments among our own churches, we need from time to time to look around us to see how the same struggle for the Christian Faith is faring, often on a much larger scale, in other families of churches. Making a deliberate effort to do that may help us to better understand the struggle as we are involved in it and to appreciate its meaning in the larger framework of the Lord's continuing work with His church.

Apparent Conservative Successes

Since Dr. Lindsell wrote his book that battle has intensified especially in his own denomination, the largest in the United States (reportedly about 50 times the size of our CRC), the Southern Baptist Convention. James C. Hefly, writing in the August 5, 1983 *Christianity Today* surveyed the development of that struggle. He called attention to the way in which U.S. Protestant churches uniformly "drift to the left" as they lose their faith in the Bible's authority under the influence of Bible criticism. Since 1979 Southern Baptist conservatives have been organizing to resist this slide into unbelief, and have seemed to begin to turn back the huge, fourteen million member, denomination toward its historic Faith.

In 1961 Ralph Elliot's commentary on Genesis which "forthrightly said that Genesis 1-11 was not factual history" stirred up a storm which resulted in the firing of the author from the seminary. In the struggles that followed conservatives elected three successive presidents who began to shift the churches' leadership back toward conservatism. This could be done because of the president's power to name the Committee on Committees, which nominated the Committee on Boards, which nominated the trustees who hired administrators of the schools and agencies. Paul Pressler, a judge and conservative leader, cited some reasons for conservative successes. They started early, tried to work within the system, sought to place conservative trustees in strategic places and, while avoiding personal attacks, they called attention to what Liberals were teaching. He recognized that conservatives still had a long way to go in their struggle.

Entrenched Liberalism

Recent reports have highlighted another side to these ostensible conservative successes. In the May 27, 1985, *Christian News* M.H. Reynolds, the editor of *Foundation* magazine, is quoted as observing that, although at the conventions "for six years in a row conservative presidents have been elected" and conservatives have claimed "victory," "how many theological liberals have lost their jobs? None, so far as we can determine. Thus, while conservatives have been busy boasting of their victories, several thousand students have continued to receive a liberal brainwashing each year and liberals in key positions on boards, agencies and publications have been permitted to continue their indoctrination of fourteen million southern Baptists with liberal theology and programs. Thus, conservatism in the SBC has actually lost ground in spite of apparent "victories," as "most of the seventy southern Baptist colleges and six seminaries are either firmly in the Liberal camp or are trying to maintain a position of neutrality."

In the May 27 *Christian News* Rev. Bob Mowrey of Nashville is quoted as he calls attention to the conscience problem of conservatives in financially supporting the denomination. "Do you wonder why some of our more evangelistic pastors find it difficult to give wholehearted support to the Cooperative Program? Is it because we want to be independent and do not love our denomination? Is it because we do not believe in missions? No! It's because we find it binding on our consciences to pay the salaries of many men who are tearing down what we believe about the Word of God. Far more of the Cooperative Program dollar goes to our colleges and seminaries than goes to the foreign mission field. For that reason some of us . . . are asking that some of our schools and seminaries be deleted from our support. This enables us to give wholehearted support to so many people in our denomination whom we love and have confidence in, and, at the same time, not to feel that we are financing our own self-destruction."

Conservative Loss by Compromise

The May 13, 1985 *Christian News* calls attention to a new book by Dr. David O. Beale, S.B.C. *House on the Sand? Critical Issues for Southern Baptists*. In its last chapter

entitled, "Will the Convention Change or Split?" this church historian concludes, "Although... conservatives have discovered the presence of the malignant cancer of apostasy in the body, they have refused a complete diagnosis and removal of the cancer until it is now terminal." "At best, contemporary conservatives are officially expressing only a desire that truth receive a hearing alongside error. Time, therefore is on the Liberals' side." The author advised loyal Christians to leave the denomination, as two or three churches each week are doing. "The cancer has permeated every area of the body, and no Bible believer should continue to feed it."

The loose convention structure of the denomination makes it difficult to take decisive action. While the Convention still officially opposes women's ordination, its churches now have an estimated over 250 ordained women, at least thirteen of whom serve as pastors, and liberal seminary professors continue to advocate that and continue to attack the inerrancy of the Bible, which explicitly forbids it.

The June 10-13 Dallas Convention threatens to be a crisis as liberals become more militant in publicly challenging recent conservative leadership. Their strategy seems to be to support a conservative candidate who will compromise and promote the financial Cooperative Program, in an effort to oust the current conservative president.

Encouraged to Keep on Running The Race

John Blankespoor

"Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith" (Heb. 12:1,2).

What a roster of believers confronts us in Hebrews 11! The writer recalls their careers to encourage Hebrew Christians who were faltering amid difficulties (3:12). In chapter 12 he cites these people who, despite having faced similar difficulties, had themselves persevered in their faith as "a cloud of witnesses."

The author refers to the example of running a race. Since the days of Alexander the Great athletic contests held in public stadiums had become popular in the entire Greek world. Masses of people flocked to them to watch the contests, just as many do today.

All Christians are, in a sense, running a race. We not only ought to do this; if we are real Christians we are doing it. We are not merely formal church members who take on religion as a kind of life insurance policy. We are called to know Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, trust Him, and gratefully obey Him. Thus we are to run our lives as a race dedicated to following the course He sets before us.

Trying to live such dedicated lives in a sinful world will confront us with many kinds of difficulties. Although some of God's people experience more of such adversities than others, all may expect to encounter some of them (Acts. 14:22).

The writer says that this race is "marked out for us." The road we must run is mapped. The Lord clearly indicates where and how He wants us to run.

It is evident that the Hebrew Christians to whom the letter was addressed were becoming weary and discouraged in running their race. We can readily understand that, the more as we ourselves encounter similar discouragements.

The Bible describes many a discouraged saint, such as the prophet Jeremiah who spoke of his soul as "downcast within me." We recall Joshua's discouragement (7:7), and Elijah's weariness under the broom tree when he asked the Lord to let him die. David repeatedly sang out of depression.

The Lord wanted them and us to persevere, and He speaks this word to us to encourage such perseverance.

In order to persevere in running this race we must "throw off everything that hinders us and the sin that entangles us." A runner in a physical race must discard any excess weights and entanglements. Can you imagine running a race encumbered with a winter coat or wearing heavy boots? Or a woman doing so in a long formal dress? Sin is such a weight or entanglement that interferes with our running the Christian race. There may also be things that are not in themselves wrong that encumber or distract us from running it as we ought. Think about self-pity, and worldly distractions, pleasures, and friendships as they interfere with our dedication to running the Lord's race. These must be thrown off.

How can we persevere in this race? We must fix our eyes upon "Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith." He as our Savior had to run the course marked out for Him. We see that in His three years of preaching and in His suffering on the cross, right up to the "It is finished!" We must fix our attention on Him, our Savior and also Example. That means a life of prayer and obedience to His Word. Those who trust and obey Him, He enables to persevere. Do you ever see those who pray little and know little of His Word showing such persistence?

The writer speaks of our being "surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses." We think of a stadium full of spectators encouraging the runners. Who are these "witnesses?" They are not mere onlookers. They are (Heb. 11) the multitude of people of God who have persisted in running the race before us and who testify to us through the pages of Holy Writ of the saving grace of Christ our Lord as it was the enabling grace manifested in their lives. Are we listening to and responding with redoubled efforts to the testimony and encouragement of this "cloud of witnesses?"

Our Lord's last words to His followers, as He was about to ascend to Heaven, were, "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world." He encourages us too, taking to heart that reminder, to persevere in the race that is still before us.

Comment and Opinion

John H. Piersma

CAN CHRISTIANS AND MUSLIMS COOPERATE? — Names that sound Dutch always arouse my curiosity as an old-line Christian Reformed Hollander. I've been reading Bruce Buursma's *Religion* column in the Chicago Tribune for some time, not only because it is usually a well-written contribution on a subject of high interest, but also because Mr. Buursma is a son of a colleague, the Rev. W. D. Buursma of Kalamazoo, and when the younger Buursma quotes another person with a name that might be of Dutch origin, our eyes and ears are apt to take notice.

"Islamic, Christian leaders join hands to promote faith" is the headline over Buursma's April 6, 1985 column. Chicago has its share of Mohammed's disciples (somewhere between 150,000 and 250,000), and their presence is taking shape on the landscape. It also has a certain Louis Farrakhan, minister of "the black separatist Nation of Islam." Mr. Farrakhan makes strong statements and has some strange allies. As Buursma puts it, "Farrakhan... achieved notoriety during Rev. Jesse Jackson's presidential campaign last year for making statements interpreted as anti-Semitic."

As if that isn't enough to embarrass any decent Muslim, the image of Islam is reported to be suffering from the resurgence of the kind of "fundamentalism" seen in such nations as Iran, terrorism, violence and racism. To counteract this a new cooperative group has been formed called the Committee for Improved Muslim-Christian relations. Its instigator and head is Prof. Harold Vogelaar, specialist in Islamic studies at Lutheran School of Theology, Chicago, and a former resident of the Middle East for twenty years.

My point in mentioning all of this lies in the comments quoted from Lionel Abdul Haqq of the American Muslim Mission and a participant in this cooperative venture. "Faith in general — its quality, its character and its image — is deteriorating in America," he said. "It's a problem for all of us, Muslims and Christians and Jews." Against that background the Committee has committed itself to "tackle the issues of racism, crime and drug abuse," and to raise its voice against permissiveness and sexual promiscuity, of promoting pleasure above morals.

I might not be comfortable with the kind of "ecumenism" which seems to be reflected in Buursma's column. But I am pleased to note that there is a real awareness of the extent and depth of moral and spiritual laxity and corruption in these final years of the Twentieth Century.

We "conservatives" have been saying things like this for too long a time. It's reassuring to notice that our diagnosis is supported by others — even if the corner out of which they come is not one from which we expected much help.

POPE CHALLENGES YOUTH TO BATTLE EVIL — Pope John Paul II has released a 15,000-word apostolic letter entitled "To the Youth of the World." It is reviewed in the Worcester, MA *Catholic Free Press*. From this review we gather that the Roman Catholic leader has said some things our own Young Calvinists might well hear! Excerpts from this review speak for themselves:

Pope John Paul II called on the world's youth to use their strength "not for the struggle of one against another" but for "the struggle against evil... against everything that offends God." (That includes) "injustice, exploitation, falsehood, deceit and everything that profanes human society and human relationships... and every crime against life." The Pope advised youths to educate themselves by building character and warned them not to be critical, skeptical or cynical.

In an apparent reference to television, he warned young people to resist the temptations of "a type of entertainment business that distracts people from a serious commitment in life and encourages passivity, selfishness and self-isolation."

Pope John Paul encourages youth to examine questions about the meaning of life and death and to realize the importance of living a moral life. "The conscience is the most important dimension of time and history," he said, urging youths to know and live the Ten Commandments. (He) emphasized the need to develop strong principles so young people might become "credible" adults... "The moral personality formed in this way constitutes the most important contribution that you can make to life in the community, to the family, to society, to professional activity, and finally to the community of the Church."

He warned young people to be aware that "today the principles of Christian morality concerning marriage are in many circles being presented in a distorted way." This distortion transforms a human being, especially a woman, from a subject into an object... "The whole great content of love is reduced to pleasure."

This apostolic letter is being distributed in a bright blue plastic cover, was printed in seven languages and supplemented by a series of Scripture selections around which the Pope developed his letter. The choice of color and format is deliberate. It is suggested by the aim Chinese leader Mao Tse-Tung had for his "red book" of sayings. Mao's book was widely read and spread throughout China to educate young people during China's cultural revolution of the mid-1960s. The Vatican would like the blue book to have the same kind of consideration and distribution among today's youth that Chairman Mao's red book had in China.

"DON'T TALK WITH MURDERERS" — This is the provocative headline from an April 15, 1985 *Wall Street Journal* article written by David Satter, identified as a former Moscow-based correspondent (six years), now a "Journal special correspondent who lives in Paris and is writing a book on the Soviet Union." Commenting on the murder of Major Arthur D. Nicholson by a Soviet sentry, Satter argues that this event ought to be met with stern protest rather than the avoidance of such action in the hope that the USA will not upset USSR leadership.

I'm not in a position to know just how much or what kind of action our government should take with respect to this very serious incident. But I am impressed with Mr. Satter's observations on the ideological character* of Communist nations as Russia.

"The great weakness of U.S. foreign policy is that while the Soviet Union is engaged in a continuous effort to impose its ideological view of reality on the world, the U.S. has traditionally been blind to the fact that ideology exists." This is Satter's thesis. It is important. With what I hope are a few well-chosen quotes let me show something of his argument:

The Soviets use America's one dimensional** approach to world affairs against it. All Soviet actions are intended to show that the U.S.S.R., dedicated to its Marxist-Leninist ideology is "principled" whereas the U.S., aside from a commitment to making money, has no principles at all. Acts like the murder of Maj. Nicholson and the shooting down of a Korean airliner are attempts to achieve a strategic advantage but, at a more fundamental level, they are the Soviet's way of demonstrating their ideological "superiority," in particular that they are willing to kill as a matter of principle but that the West is not even willing to defend its dignity when it conflicts with its perceived interests. . . .

I lived in the Soviet Union for six years and, confronted as I was with the mental twilight of a country that daily tries to create its own reality, it occurred to me often that a knowledge of the Soviet ideology is essential to an understanding of the world situation, because it is the ideology that provides the psychological blueprint for the behavior of the Soviet regime. . . .

By the logic of the Soviet ideology, the Soviet regime, as the representative of the working class, assumes a divine character and the life of Maj. Nicholson or the lives of innocent air passengers have no importance compared with the "sacred" security interests of the Soviet state. . . there is no absolute morality but only "class morality," of which the highest is the morality of the "working class." Since the Soviet regime supposedly represents the working class, its every action is an expression of its moral perfection, including the murder of Maj. Nicholson. This is why there will be no compensation for his widow and no apology for his murder.

All kinds of speculation exists today about the character of Mr. Gorbachev, the new Soviet leader. His age, the attractiveness of his wife, their interests in things Western, etc. are all being read to believe that Mr. Gorbachev we have a man with whom we can "do business," whom we can trust to do "the decent thing." Taking note of President Reagan's renewed desire to meet with his Soviet counterpart, Satter observes:

Mr. Reagan apparently believes in the possibility that personal contacts can overcome even profound political differences but such faith is misplaced in the case of the Soviet system. It is virtually impossible for a Soviet party careerist, steeped in disinformation and forced constantly to parrot ideological inanities, to hold out against the forces of total spiritual annihilation as he moves up the Soviet hierarchy. The combination of the acceptance of the regime as the arbiter of reality and its class morality creates a self-contained mental universe that rapidly becomes self-justifying and coexists in each person's mind with the ability to think and react according to normal principles. The resulting split in consciousness, which makes all top Soviet leaders look as if they are members of the same extended family, precludes the possibility that any Soviet leader can have a meaningful exchange of views with a U.S. President.

A few comments (and a recommendation):

1. It seems to me that we were more aware of the ideological character of things once upon a time than we are now. Wasn't the formidable word *ideology* really understood by us as something identical to the Bible's reference to the wicked world? A world we should resist at all costs? Didn't that give us a better point of departure for serious address to our people (especially our youth) concerning spiritual and moral and theological issues? I think so.
2. In the citations above reference is made to the American tendency to believe that all ideas and convictions which divide people are dissolvable in the warm and friendly exercise of loving communication. "If only we sit down and talk" we'll find understanding, affection, unity, agreement — and we'll eliminate the ugly possibility of hatred, dislike, division, even war. Of course, a willingness to discuss things in a Christian manner can have very blessed results. But to suggest that one's dearly-held convictions are not matters of principle but only of personal preference or traditional allegiance is scarcely complimentary and, at bottom, ultimate differences between those for and those against Christ are not resolvable, unless we fall down in repentance before Him who is "the seed of the woman" (Gen. 3:15).
3. A recommendation: the best Christian spokesman for the Christian position against Marxist-Leninist (Communist) thought among us is, in my opinion, Dr. Lester De Koster. I am not his agent (as some people have been heard to allege), but if you can get him to lecture on this subject don't pass it up! We can use all the help we can get to be alert to this terribly important anti-Christian, world-wide movement.

SUING THE CHURCH AND ITS MINISTERS — Bringing people before the law to claim legal redress is not unusual these days. And this development is not only threatening the medical profession (malpractice), but is now entering into the church and the parsonage as well.

USA TODAY (April 15, 1985) lists the following lawsuits to illustrate ecclesiastical vulnerability to "the law:"

An Oklahoma court awarded \$390,000 to a woman who said the Church of Christ of Collinsville had caused her emotional distress when it branded her a fornicator.

A California jury awarded \$2.1 million to a Santa Clara woman who said the Church of Scientology defrauded her by failing to fulfill promises to improve her life.

And the Supreme Court has declared that the interest of the state in protecting a child's life overrides parents' religious rights to refuse medical care for the child.

This is of greatest significance for any church which intends to be *church* as defined by the Scriptures and the Reformed creeds. Because that means the recognition of three marks as indicative of Scriptural genuineness: the pure preaching of the Word, the proper administration of the sacraments (baptism and the Lord's Supper), and the exercise of church discipline "in punishing of sin" (Belgic Confession, Art. XXIX). The exercise of the third mark requires the making of public announcements.

I think the use of public announcements in the disciplinary process ought to be re-examined.

Not that the congregation should not be given official information on the crucially important business of the discipline of its members. In fact, this ought to be done with even more regard for the maturity of the New Testament believer. I think it ought to be arranged so that a good discussion of the matter be made possible by the communicant members of the church.

I suggest that we do this only at *officially called congregational meetings*. This might have the following advantages:

1. It prevents the possibility of a lawsuit alleging defamation of character by virtue of an announcement made in a public worship service.
2. It makes possible not only a more detailed (within the boundaries of Christian propriety, of course) report of the work of the elders in this instance, but also a discus-

sion of the case accompanied by fervent prayers for the spiritual recovery of the person(s) being disciplined.

Since we have synodical study committees on all kinds of matters, maybe one on this subject could be considered as needed and possibly helpful.

WAS KARL MARX RIGHT ONCE? — Somewhere in England while on a vacation trip recently I read that Karl Marx said, "The Church of England would rather give up thirty-eight of its thirty-nine Articles rather than one-thirtieth of its wealth."

That qualifies, I'm sure, as a rather cute remark. Since I'm not Church of England or Anglican, I can't verify its accuracy. I do know that it is an interesting and even edifying experience to sit in on the early morning Communion service in Westminster Abbey.

Forgetting for a moment the kind of Satanic figure Marx was (and is), we'd all have to admit that the tendency of organized religion is to show greater regard for its external treasures than its heavenly mandate. Too bad!

**The term ideology refers to the system of thought known popularly as communism, regarded by its adherents as absolute truth—making it an ardent opponent of Christianity.*

***Russian policy is two-dimensional, politico-economic and ideological, while American foreign policy is seen here as mainly interested in the former. You may have noticed that when even President Reagan talks about the evil nature of Communism as an evil ideology criticism in the media can be very severe.*

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Sanford G. Shetler

For years we have been used to hearing about tricks in politics and government circles, the use of methods which at the least are questionable. The word "politics" has long had a sinister connotation. It is taken almost for granted that government officials, be they ever so popular and accepted, somewhere along the line pull strings, use manipulative methods to achieve their ends and simply play the artful games of politics. The public has seemingly become inured to all this so that they accept it almost with a smile.

But regardless of that kind of routine acceptance of the political game, dishonesty and under-the-table methods, respect of persons who have power and money—all of these methods will always be wrong by any moral standards. And dishonesty will always remain dishonesty and unfairness, unfairness, and sin, sin.

All of this, as stated, is more or less expected(!) in government circles where it is taken for granted that politicians and so-called statesmen are not necessarily going to abide by the Ten Commandments or the Sermon on the Mount or any other biblical standard.

But when some of these same political methods are used in church circles, such behavior becomes not only disappointing, but totally reprehensible. The Bible is full of condemnation for those who pose as God's anointed to suddenly betray their calling and engage in the same craft and cunningness as unregenerate men in society. Both the Old and New Testaments condemn partiality, respect of persons, and inequity.

Many church leaders are completely aware of some of these improper acts in the church, but apparently are unwilling to jeopardize their own standing in church circles. Unwittingly, however, they become accomplices to the devious tactics used. Their silence also reinforces the "all-is-well" attitudes of the people in the pew who out of innocence have the highest confidence in the church's leadership and as a result come to believe that it is only a few negatively minded critics who are raising all the cries of alarm in the church. It should be stated, of course, that there are still many faithful leaders who are true to their calling.

Political maneuverings in the church, as in the public domain, are evidenced by such tactics as:

1. Controlling elections and appointments by careful selection of nominating committees.
2. Using parliamentary and unparliamentary procedures to achieve their goals.
3. Giving slanted coverage through the church media of church events or activities that seem to run counter to what certain leaders have before decided should be the

course or program of the church, freely denigrating or misquoting persons who faithfully try to raise a prophetic voice in the church. (Incidentally, while so-called "prophetic witness" to the state is lauded, using the same kind of prophetic witness to the church is not.) It should be remembered that the prophets of the Old Testament spoke chiefly against the religious leaders as also did Jesus against the religious leaders of His day.

4. Making much ado about brotherly love—it seems, however, that this agape is to be exercised by the conservative element toward the liberal element and not the other way around.
5. Conducting studies on various issues which lack integrity in terms of being slanted, using only sources that favor the expected outcome. Various denominations in the past decade have been on a study binge, it seems, on such issues as homosexuality, human sexuality, women's role in the church—studies which in almost every case are not objective but extremely slanted. One leader of a certain denomination which spent eight years studying women's role has referred to these studies as being "as phony as a \$3 bill!"
6. Using speakers in public programs, seminars and church school platforms who conform to the predetermined views and goals of church officials and program committees, and eliminating speakers who are known to take opposing or unpopular views.

All of the foregoing has been aptly characterized by Dr. Stephen W. Paine, President and Professor of Greek at Houghton College, New York, in these very pungent words:

The characteristic of modern 'liberal' critical teachers which amazes one most is their absolute confidence in their own conclusions based upon evidence however trivial, and involving tremendously important departures from tenets maintained for centuries by the historic church.

The serious element in all this is that such liberal leaders will one day have to give an account of their stewardship (as "stewards of the mysteries of God"—I Cor. 4:1). They will be judged on how they have handled the Word and their colleagues in the church.

In this hour of extreme crisis in the church, amidst what has been called the "great evangelical disaster" (Schaeffer) there is need as never before for courageous leadership that will stand up and be counted. Whatever the cost to our own reputation we must be men of integrity. There can be no legitimate alternative!

Reprinted from Guidelines for Today, Sanford G. Shetler's editorial.



Reformed Against Biblical?

J. Tuininga

To one who has read other writings of his, it comes as no surprise that Dr. S. Woudstra, editor of *De Wachter*, recently made a pitch for opening all the offices in the church to women. He writes in a recent editorial that for years already he has considered it to be unbiblical to close any one of the offices to women. Open all the offices to women and don't talk about it anymore, is his advice. It is interesting to take a look at his argumentation.

According to Woudstra, the position of those who are opposed to women in office is based upon "a few texts" and a "vague headship principle." This way of handling Scripture inclines toward a "fundamentalistic" view of the Bible rather than a Reformed one. And there is a big difference between trying to base one's position on a few isolated texts in the Bible and real "biblical thinking." The former position is also known as "biblicism." According to Woudstra, seminary professors have often been accused of defending women in office, but, says Woudstra, this only speaks well of them, for it shows that our seminary in this regard still moves along Reformed lines. Woudstra concludes by making a reference to the Minority II report presented to last year's synod by Sarah Cook and Willis De Boer. This, says he, was a good attempt to understand the Scriptural givens in their historical setting. He also considers the opposition to the decision of last year's synod as coming very close to a wave of anti-feminism.

Well, there you have it. If it wasn't for the fact that Woudstra has a position of influence and that his view is shared by several more of our leaders, one would be inclined to dismiss the matter. But at least a few comments are in order.

1. The charge of "fundamentalism" is a handy epithet for those holding to a strict view of the Bible, but an epithet is also recognized as a last resort of a weak or defeated cause. What is more, as Prof. Marten Woudstra has pointed out on more than one occasion, there are times in the modern debate about the Bible when Reformed people should be glad to wear the "fundamentalist" badge as a badge of honor. For it is often synonymous with a high view of Scripture.
2. How does one go about determining the overall sense of Scripture (including its historical sense) without giving due attention the *text* of Scripture? It is easy to drive a wedge between "text" and "sense," but it is really

a false dilemma, somewhat akin to a neo-orthodox view of Scripture.

3. Is it really so that the historical stand of the church re women in office, was based on "a few isolated texts?" Is it not much rather the case that it was based squarely on the creation order itself, which order is not abrogated by redemption, but rather *restored* by it? Paul refers very clearly to the creation and fall of man and to what "the law" says. That is something else than "isolated texts." As the Rev. P.M. Jonker stated in the first "minority report" in 1973: "It seems to me that the only reasonable explanation for this exclusion is the command to submissiveness based on the order God made and prescribed in creation and which order he upheld after the fall into sin."
4. The editor of *The Banner* once made the commendable statement that "one should not try to make these texts say the opposite of what they seem to be saying to the ordinary reader." Woudstra's interpretation does exactly that. And so does the Minority II Report submitted to last year's synod, a report that Woudstra finds so commendable. In actual fact, that Report stinks! It denies the perspicuity of the Scriptures, and for all practical purposes takes the Bible out of the hands of the ordinary reader and makes it a book for which we need the "theological high-priests" in order to understand it. If we must believe this Report, then the Bible is a very opaque and obscure book which can be interpreted in a variety of ways, none of which we're sure about.

Woudstra would do well in this connection to digest the booklet by Prof. H. Vander Goot, *Interpreting the Bible in Theology and the Church*. Here Vander Goot stresses the priority and sovereignty of the *text* of Scripture, warns against the "eclipse of the literal sense," and says that the understanding of the Bible by the Christian community is prior to and primary for the scientific study of the Bible by theologians. Vander Goot wishes to wrest Scripture free from the stranglehold of modern professionalism, and calls for an "obedient, reverent use of the Bible." That is something that has been missing in many of the study committee reports of the last several years. We must take to heart what Prof. Runia writes in Nov. '84

Calvin Theological Journal about the hermeneutics of the Reformers: "Since in the opinion of most scholars the real truth lies *behind* the texts, the Bible again becomes an obscure book, the understanding of which becomes dependent upon the 'high priests' of modern scholarship. This means that the lay reader is again relegated to a position of dependence on the expert." Oh that we would take that to heart in the CRC today!

5. Woudstra thinks he detects "anti-feminism" in the protests against the decision of last year's synod. I wish he had made similar warnings against what Piersma rightly calls "the radical, revolutionary spirit of the modern feminist movement" which has also greatly infected the CRC!

6. It is strange that Woudstra appears to see nothing wrong with the trend toward using the lot when electing elders and deacons, for here is a clear base where "isolated texts" are used to promote it, while the clear redemptive-historical sense of the Bible is against it. It would mean a return to the "shadows" of the Old Testament. Why not be consistent?

In conclusion, I believe we are on dangerous ground when we adopt a view of Scripture such as promulgated by Woudstra. I must confess that with editorial leadership like that, it may not be a bad thing that *De Wachter* is being phased out. ®

J. Tuininga, Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada

The Manufacturing Instructions for Marriage

Peter De Jong

Many of our churches' theologians have recently been appealing to the Bible's alleged principles to cancel out ("as time-conditioned") its inconvenient instructions and details. Anyone who indulges in that practice is going to miss much of its Divine revelation. (In fact, by this process, today's theologians, just like their Jewish predecessors, whom our Lord repeatedly called "blind guides" [Mt. 15:14; 23:16, 17, 24, 26], rapidly lose all of it, because in the very process not the Bible, but they determine what is to be "revelation.")

In the Bible the light of God's revelation often strikes the reader from places where he would least expect it. In the 24th chapter of the prophecy of Ezekiel (v. 16), for example, the prophet, commissioned to bring his people God's warnings and threats, was informed that in this process his wife would be taken from him by a stroke. The way in which she is described arrests our attention: "I take away from thee the desire of thine eyes. . . ." Notice the significance of that remark. It suggests that in that godly home it was the wife who put sparkle in her husband's eyes.

Again, in the Song of Solomon one notices the recurring charge to "awake not my love until he please"—suggesting the woman's concern not to disturb her sleeping lover. Foolish people may talk of time conditioning, but they do not change the structure of intimacy God designed when he surprised Adam with Eve.

In this connection, we notice the currently popular and pervasive effort to interpret the gospel as a "liberation" from all restraints and laws both human and divine. That effort then encourages a couple to approach marriage with the assumption that in today's world they must determine for themselves, perhaps by trial and error, what, if any, struc-

ture their relationship is to have. To adjust oneself to marriage is a complex experience for anyone. To impose or assume the additional assignment of determining, as though for the first time, what the relationship ought to be is to attempt the impossible. When a couple begins with that kind of misdirection, it should occasion no surprise that for many the exciting adventure may soon turn into a nightmare. God never left us to face marriage or any other human experience with such a total lack of direction. Perhaps nowhere else does the stupidity of acting as though He did show its bitter consequences more widely than in our society's horrendous family problems. Almost any Christian minister could illustrate this with innumerable saddening examples from pastoral experience.

When we conduct a wedding, perhaps in deference to a couple's desire to appear up-to-date, as though there were no specific rules or guides for their relationship, we do neither them nor any of the visitors a favor. A wedding offers an ideal opportunity to point all to the Creator's design and revealed intent for what ought to be a happy home but can only become that if it complies with His design.

In one way or another, we need to stress what our older wedding form endeavored to do, God's clear directions for the role to which He assigns each husband and wife. Then we can also proceed to what increasingly impresses me as one of the happiest details of the traditional form, the final blessing. As a "blessing," echoing inspired Scripture, it is not so much wish as promise: "May the Father of all mercies, who of His grace has called you to this holy state of marriage, bind you together in true love and faithfulness and grant you His blessing." ®

Methods of Evangelism

J. Tuininga

Paul once said of some of his fellow Jews: They have a zeal, but not according to knowledge. I sometimes think of these words in connection with some methods of evangelism employed by radio preachers, churches and para-church groups. At times the gospel itself is disgraced by those who are supposed to enhance it. Zeal for evangelism is good, but it must be accompanied by a thorough knowledge of what the gospel is all about.

Even in the CRC we have not always escaped the temptation of using methods that are less than biblical, less than Reformed. We have at times taken a "smorgasbord" approach to the matter: borrowing a bit from here and a little from there, without a clear, coherent and consistent package. We seem to get carried away by methods which others appear to use successfully, and suddenly Reformed principles recede into the background.

I thought of this after reading the guest editorial in *The Banner* of May 6 by Dirk Hart, minister of evangelism, entitled "Inviting People to Christ." There he makes a plea for using a form of the "altar call" in our public worship services. We need such a "call" he says in order "to recommit ourselves to the missionary nature of the church," "to experience again that the gospel is not only for edification but for powerful, experiential renewal," and for "fresh evidence that the gospel is still powerful to save."

He cites with enthusiasm the example of his own pastor, who, "like a bolt out of the blue," announced to the congregation: "Following this morning's service some of the elders and I will be in the deacons' room to talk with anyone who wishes to profess his or her faith." The result: After the service eight people appeared in the room and two weeks later "the church rejoiced in eight public professions of faith."

To some that may sound impressive and spectacular, but to me it seems a very strange way of doing things in the church, especially in a Reformed church.

First a number of questions: Who were these people? Were they regular members of the congregation, that is, young people who had been baptized but not yet made public profession of their faith? If so, were they receiving instruction to prepare them for this step? If they were, did the minister not talk to them in the regular classes about this matter and what it entailed? Did he talk about the date and the time when they should appear before the consistory? Were these eight part of a larger class, some of whom made public profession of faith later on? I just don't understand the rationale for this approach, if indeed these were young people of the church.

But perhaps they were not. Were they visitors? Did they have some church background, and did they understand the basics of the gospel? Had they received instruction? If not, could the elders and the minister examine them on the spot and decide that they were good candidates for public profession of faith? Once again, I just can't make heads or tails out of such an approach. Is that the way things work in a Reformed church? Our *Church Order*, Art. 63, says: "Each church shall instruct its youth — and others who are interested — in the teaching of the Scriptures as formulated in the creeds of the church, in order to prepare them to profess their faith publicly. . . ." When that is done, and when the minister, together with those being instructed, believe that the time has come for public profession of faith, that is talked about in class and proper arrangements are made for that — including the appearance before the consistory. As I see it, that is the only proper way to do things, and it just leaves no room for the kind of procedure described in Hart's article. It may be sensational, but it makes no sense, at least not from a Reformed point of view. I just cannot conceive of a situation where such a "call out of the blue" would be appropriate, at least not when church membership is involved. The whole thing leaves me bewildered.

As for the "altar call" itself, the words of James Daane in his booklet *Preaching With Confidence* are apropos:

To think that more than preaching is required, that altar call must follow sermon to render the preached word effective, betrays a lack of faith in the mysterious, creative, saving power of the Word of God, qualities which no other words possess, not even those well-intended human words heard in an altar call. . . .

Every attempt to empower the Word by human strategies and techniques is no less than gimmickry which dishonors the Word. The temptation to play God and make His Word effectual takes many and subtle forms. For example, to pray with (not *for*) an unbeliever, after one has preached the Word, in an effort to bring that person to conversion dishonors the Word and is a misuse of prayer. . . . To unbelievers the minister of the gospel must preach the Word, pray that the proclamation will be effective, and then relax and let things rest in the hand of God.

It is not the duty of ministers of the Word to convert; it is only their duty prayerfully to preach the Word. Less than this they ought not to do; more they cannot do. . . .

The achievements of preaching always remain in the hand of God.

I don't find any of Hart's reasons for having a "call" the least bit convincing. All three things can and do take place without such a "call." I would suggest that Hart and all seminarians and ministers thoroughly digest and imbibe the contents of Daane's book. It could have a blessed effect. ●

REPORT

On the Northwest Iowa Chapter of Reformed Fellowship

Mark VanderHart

Several hundred people gathered in the Dordt College chapel on the evening of April 17, 1985, for the spring mass meeting of Reformed Fellowship of Northwest Iowa. The main speaker of the evening was Dr. Lester De Koster, former editor of *The Banner*. His topic was entitled, "What can be done to return the Christian Reformed Church to its historic, Reformed heritage?"

Dr. De Koster began by mentioning two propositions which every Reformed believer maintains. First, truth does not depend on us. Rather, we depend on it. Second, truth cannot be defended. Rather, it must defend us. He briefly elaborated by stating that it is the Triune God who maintains creation. In the Triune God, Christ the Son restores those who are fallen into sin. The inspired Scriptures proclaim the truth. This truth enters the world through obedient pulpits. The pulpits become the "lips of the Lord."

Believing this makes orthodox Christians humbly proud. Tampering with this is liberalism and heterodoxy. Liberalism lives with the illusion that shortcuts can further the progress of the Lord. Liberalism lacks stability and coherence because it has no standard of measurement. It thinks it leads the crowd with current fads: nuclear freeze, South African apartheid, women's liberation.

Liberalism is a parasite that feeds off the mistakes of conservatives. De Koster said that we should be thankful for the crisis regarding women in office because it forces Reformed believers to take stock of themselves. Factions in the church can be for our profit (cf. I Cor. 11:19).

The Calvinist Past

De Koster briefly reflected on what happened when Calvinists presented God's truth to the world through faithful preaching. The Calvinist heritage gave the Western world political liberty and economic free enterprise. Even Communists are envious of our progress. But Western society is now being torn apart by the clamor for "rights." Calvinist pulpits, homes, and lecterns must faithfully proclaim that there are no rights without a correlation with duties and obligations. De Koster said that there may yet be a societal flowering under God's grace mediated through vigorous preaching. The Calvinist's attitude should now be, "We have not yet begun to fight."

What Went Wrong?

De Koster set forth the idea that we conservatives are the problem and not the liberals. Liberals are not smart people who trick conservatives. To think so is dangerous. Liberals are not creative; they are parasites and should not be blamed for current problems. Conservatives have retreated too many times, thus creating vacuums in the Church.

Therefore, the solution to the Christian Reformed Church problems is not to attack the liberal mind since this will not reform the Church. We must recover and know the rich Reformed heritage. The Word of God preached is the heart of all Reformed churches. This is how society is changed, not by chasing fads. Conservatives, however, have themselves not always been convinced of the power of preaching. Such a conviction must be recovered.

Conservatives have forgotten as well what the Great Commission must mean for the Church and her mission in the world. Jesus Christ told the apostles to make disciples, not converts. A disciple is a long term student who shoulders a cross as he follows the Master. Such a disciple is to receive baptism and instruction in everything which the Master has commanded. This is to occur within the sphere of the Church and not outside of it. De Koster reminded his audience that the Reformed faith also maintains that "outside of the Church (visible), there is no salvation." If we claim God as our Father, then we must claim the Church as our Mother.

Conservatives have forgotten these things. De Koster said that the greatest threat to the Reformed heritage is the crusade evangelists who say, "Are you saved, brother?" Once this is accepted, almost anything else in the Church becomes easier to accept.

De Koster made the point that the Soviet Union knows full well the different beliefs within Christianity. The strong Christianity of Solzhenitsyn is intolerable in communist Russia, but the crusader evangelicalism of Billy Graham is no threat to the Soviet Union. Billy Graham's version of the Gospel has so infected us that liberalism can now have an easy time. The Bible excludes, the speaker said, "sharing Christ" in a coffee-house ministry. If Christ can be peddled door to door through the "Four Spirit Laws" or the C.E.T.

method, then how can we criticize the reductionism of the liberals? Often the liberals manipulate texts, emotions, and experiences. If conservatives allow them to manipulate Romans 10 on the necessity of preaching, then conservatives may be willing to allow them to play with Romans 5 on the origin of sin.

What Can Be Done?

De Koster advocated that conservatives learn their Reformed heritage again through study groups of men and women in each congregation. Beside study, these groups must insist on pulpits and schools teaching such a Reformed heritage. The printed media must be used. These groups should sponsor seminars on issues facing the church. This is work on a long range basis.

Some immediate goals were also mentioned. The Synod must reverse the 1984 decision on women in the diaconate. The quota system should be re-evaluated. Graduates from Mid-America Reformed Seminary must be freed from the one year requirement of attendance at Calvin Seminary. Congregations must step forward and work for this. The Synod must be liberated from the Calvin Seminary faculty. Such faculty members must not serve as advisors ("experts"), and their participation must be restricted. The delegates to Synod are competent to handle the issues which face them.

In short, De Koster impressed upon his audience that the Reformed faith is a world-changing faith. Conservatives must rediscover this and live according to it. Far too often, the conservatives have let their tradition slip through their fingers.

Following the address members of the audience had the opportunity to vote for three new board members. Elected were the Rev. Stuart Pastine (President), Marvin Hoogland (Vice-President), and Harlan De Vries (Secretary).

Those present also received copies of two resolutions which they could sign. These resolutions were neither discussed nor explained. Resolution I was signed by 190 people, and Resolution II was signed by 163 people.

Resolution I

Considering the sinfulness of this present age, the apostasy of the churches, and the many temptations surrounding the youth of the covenant, we hereby resolve to appeal to all the consistories of the Christian Reformed Church to redouble their efforts in providing thorough, basic catechism training for the youth of the churches (Hosea 4:6).

We firmly believe that a basic training in the precepts of the Word of God as presented by the Heidelberg Catechism is indispensable in producing knowledgeable members of the church, who love the truth of God's Word and seek the purity of the church. Catechism training should be much more than exposure—it should be indoctrination. This is the best way to keep the little foxes and their destructive power out of the vineyard of our Lord.

Resolution II

We hereby resolve that the New Confession called "Our World Belongs to God" (Agenda 1983 pp. 407-422) is not based upon a unified, objective presentation of the truths of Scripture. It is the result of subjective ideas of fallible human beings. It does not represent the creedal thinking of the Christian Reformed Church. Change for the sake of change does not purify the church. It often makes more room for liberal departures from the truth of God's Word. ●

Reformed Opportunity and Need in Zaire

Maynard Koerner

The May issue of the *Outlook* reported on the organization of the Reformed Confessing Church of Zaire. This certainly is cause for great joy and praise to God among the Reformed community. It is a particular thrill and cause for rejoicing in the Lord for the Reformed Church in the United States. It is a great honor for us to be the sponsoring Church of this newly organized Church in Zaire.

We thank God for the door which He has opened on the continent of Africa to the Gospel through the preaching of Rev. Aaron Kayayan of the French speaking broadcast of the Back To God Hour. In just a few short years of broadcasting, 10-20 thousand people have responded and now want to be part of this new Reformed Church. The Church is in a very early stage of development. Many groups have not yet been organized into congregations. Yet the people are very enthusiastic and are working hard to advance the work of their Church. Some leaders have already translated a constitution as well as the Heidelberg Catechism into Tshiluba, the native language of Northern Zaire.

The forming of the Reformed Confessing Church of Zaire is in some ways unique. Although the Reformed Church in the United States has officially sponsored the Church in Zaire it is completely indigenous. It is a self-governing and self-propagating Church. The RCUS will merely serve in the capacity of advisors.

Though the Church in Zaire is indigenous it does have a great many needs. These are primarily in the area of diaconal assistance. The people of Zaire are very poor. The average family income is approximately \$25 per month. There is a great need for Bibles and catechisms. There are no medical facilities available at all. Most of the groups that are being organized into congregations have to meet outdoors because they have no buildings in which to meet for worship. If they have a place for worship it is probably a very small crude building constructed from dried manure bricks.

Though the RCUS has made no commitment to meet these needs, we are making every effort to do what we can. A shipment of Bibles has been ordered and a Heidelberg Catechism in the native language will be printed soon. The need for places in which to worship presents the greatest hurdle. This is simply due to the large amount of funds that it will take to provide useable places of worship.

The RCUS through its Diaconal committee has established a special fund for Bibles for Zaire as well as a fund for building projects for Zaire. We invite any who might be interested in helping with the diaconal needs in Zaire to send contributions. The biggest need is, of course, with the building projects for Zaire. Any money sent to this fund would be used to provide places of worship for the Church in Zaire. If you have any interest in this please contact the Chairman of the Diaconal Committee of the RCUS.

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Not only do we rejoice in the Lord for the beginning of the Reformed Confessing Church in Zaire but also that He has given us an opportunity to minister to the diaconal needs of our brothers and sisters in Zaire. It is our prayer that the Lord will use us in this way to advance His kingdom in Africa.

Rev. Maynard Koerner is the chairman of the Diaconal Committee of the Reformed Church of the U.S.

A Nineteenth-Century REFORMER

Rus Pulliam

The British are giving honor this year to a 19th-century member of Parliament who demonstrated a solution to America's social problems.

Lord Shaftesbury died 100 years ago after an influential career in both houses of the Parliament in England.

He might have become prime minister if he had set his sights on political power and prestige, instead of helping the poor.

"Whatever may be true in the 20th century, in Shaftesbury's day an interest in social questions was certainly not a passport to political office," comments biographer Georgina Battiscombe.

Yet he wound up having as much influence as any prime minister, especially in guiding England's adjustment to the industrial revolution.

Shaftesbury has not been so well known in the United States, perhaps because he never sought high political office. He's been overshadowed by Queen Victoria and prime ministers Benjamin Disraeli and William Gladstone.

But the lessons of Shaftesbury's life are pertinent today, in the political debate over social issues such as poverty, the homeless, child abuse and neglect and alcohol abuse.

Shaftesbury was born in 1801, just as the industrial revolution was sweeping through England, sending thousands of people into urban areas for factory work and underground coal mining.

In his novels, Charles Dickens popularized the misery of the working conditions which sent men, women and children to work 15 hours a day or more, ruined the eyes of many and crippled countless others with backbreaking labor.

Shaftesbury grew up on the other side of the tracks from the poor people he helped so much. But he was called through his conversion to Jesus Christ to advance a wide range of remedies to these social problems, using the Bible as his primary guide.

Politically it would be difficult to classify him as a liberal or conservative in today's terms. He was a member of the Tory party, in opposition to the Whigs or Liberals.

With respect to correcting the injustices of his time, he was far ahead of both political parties in proposing legislative answers. Child labor laws began with Shaftesbury's efforts, along with a long campaign to limit the factory work day to 10 hours.

He was instrumental in advancing more humane treatment for the mentally ill as well. He was one of the early advocates of what's called public health today, campaigning for sanitary standards and clean water in urban areas.

We tend to take his contributions for granted today, but his contemporaries came to recognize his monumental achievements. The Duke of Argyle summed up his life at the end of the 19th century this way: "All the great reforms of the past 50 years have been brought about, not by the Liberal party, nor by the Tory party, but by the labors of one man—the Earl of Shaftesbury."

He never assumed that government alone could resolve these problems. He saw the need for cooperation between church and state to come up with solutions. In his spare time he gave countless hours to establish "ragged schools," or orphan homes for the many unwanted children who roamed the streets of London and other cities. He was involved in dozens of other private efforts to help the poor as well, with a vision for the church and the state working together to accomplish common objectives.

His biographer, Georgina Battiscombe, details the personal problems he overcame in the process, including a tendency toward severe mental depression and hypersensitivity as well as destructive personal treatment at a young age from his parents.

"Humanly speaking he could hardly be expected to achieve anything remarkable either for himself or for his fellow men," she sums up. "Both by temperament and by circumstance he seemed destined at best to a small success, at worst to complete failure. No man has in fact ever done more to lessen the extent of human misery or to add to the sum total of human happiness."

Reprinted by permission from The Indianapolis News. Mr. Rus Pulliam is a writer for this newspaper.

The Banner of Truth Conference

Henry Vanden Heuvel

In past years, we have covered in these pages the ministers' and elders' conference sponsored by the Banner of Truth. The 7th such conference was held on the campus of Calvin College and Seminary on May 28-31, 1985. The theme of this conference was The Office and Work of the Holy Spirit. Those who attended were blessed by the Word of God as expounded by some of the ablest preachers and teachers in the English speaking world today.

The Banner of Truth is a magazine published by the Banner of Truth Trust of Edinburgh, Scotland. The Trust is primarily interested in the publication of Reformed literature. It also publishes the monthly magazine with the same name. For a number of years, the Trust has sponsored a ministers' and elders' conference in England called the Leicester Conference. Its spiritual father was Dr. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones. During the past seven years, *The Banner of Truth* has sponsored similar conferences on the North American continent. This year's conference again merits our enthusiastic endorsement.

The principle speakers were Dr. Sinclair Ferguson from Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia; Dr. Albert N. Martin from the Trinity Baptist Church in Montville, NJ; Rev. Iain Murray, editor of *The Banner of Truth* from Edinburgh; and Dr. O. Palmer Robertson from Covenant Theological Seminary, St. Louis. These men opened the Scriptures on the subject of the office and work of the Holy Spirit.

John Owen on The Holy Spirit

Dr. Ferguson presented two lectures on John Owen's teaching on the Holy Spirit. Although one might expect that a lecture on such a topic would bore any not familiar with the writings of one of the greatest 17th Century theologians, that was not the case. Sinclair Ferguson has a unique style and ability to present great truths in simple form. His lecture showed not so much what John Owen said as what the Bible says about the Holy Spirit. And when one listens to the Scriptures regarding this crucial doctrine, one is enthralled by the depth of its teaching on person and work of the Holy Spirit. Dr. Ferguson spoke of the Holy Spirit in the life of our Lord Jesus Christ, pointing out that the Bible speaks of the ministry of the Spirit in the incarnation of Christ, in the ministry of Christ, in His work of atonement, and in His exaltation. He pointed out that the Holy Spirit sanctified the Lord Jesus already in the womb of the virgin Mary. The Spirit thrust Jesus out into the wilderness to do battle with Satan, and enabled Him to overcome in the temptations.

The work of the Holy Spirit is also emphasized in Scripture as being His ministry in the lives of God's people. The Spirit of God is called our paraclete in the New Testament. A paraclete is one's best friend who stands by him in time of trouble. The Holy Spirit dwells not just along side the believer, but *within* him to give direction and guidance.

Old and New Testament Prophecy

Dr. O. Palmer Robertson presented two lectures, the first concerning prophecy in the Old and New Testament. A prophet, said Robertson, is not so much a "fore-teller" as a "forth-teller." He is called upon to stand between God and His people, sent to proclaim God's will to His people. Throughout the Old Testament, the prophets were all mere men whose task was to run between God and the people. The ultimate goal was not yet achieved, at which time no prophet would be necessary between God and the people. That goal is met when God Himself becomes the prophet in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. Robertson showed how Deuteronomy 18:15-18 speaks of that goal that God had in mind already at the beginning of Israel's history. Prophecy in both the Old and New Testament is revelational in that it presents God's revelation to His people. Because we have the Word of God today, the Sacred Scriptures, we do not need prophets anymore. Thus prophecy does not continue today either as forth-telling or fore-telling. The Word of God is God's revelation of Himself to us.

Tongues Today?

One of the most helpful as well as interesting presentations was the lecture by Palmer Robertson entitled, "Tongues Today?" In working with the Scriptural teaching on the gift of tongues, he used especially the passages from I Corinthians 14 and Acts 2, 10, and 19. He developed four elements in the Scriptural manifestation on the use of tongues which, he said, show that the gift of tongues is not a present-day gift of the Holy Spirit. These four elements are that tongues in the New Testament were revelational, they were foreign languages, they were for public consumption, and they were signs.

I Corinthians 14:2 says, "For anyone who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God. Indeed, no one understands him; he utters mysteries with his spirit." The person speaking in tongues in the Corinthian church was uttering mysteries, Paul says. And a mystery is clearly that which was once concealed but is now revealed. That is, a mystery is a revelation of God. Again in vv. 4 and 5 of I Corinthians 14 Paul equates tongues with prophecy, and prophecy in the New Testament church was revelational. The person speaking in tongues understood what he was saying and thus he edified himself. But when the speech was interpreted, it edified the entire congregation.

By comparing Acts 2 where the apostles spoke in other languages, with the passages which also deal with speaking in tongues, Dr. Robertson was able to prove that the use of tongues in the Corinthian church was also speaking in foreign languages. But it is clear that the use of these languages was

for public consumption. It was for the common good, not just for one's own personal edification. And clearly this is not what is emphasized by those in the charismatic movement today. They emphasize that speaking in tongues is a personal and private means of spiritual edification. Such an attitude is totally contrary to Scripture, and it shows that the present day phenomenon is not the same as the tongues in I Corinthians 14.

In a most interesting study of Scriptural data, Robertson traced the usages of foreign languages in the Old Testament. He showed that God spoke of foreign languages to His people as a means of judgment against them. He said in Deuteronomy 28:49 that he would bring against them a nation whose language they would not understand. Again in Jeremiah 5:15 God said the same thing. The message of the Lord was that God would turn from dealing only with Israel to opening His revelation to other nations whose languages the people could not understand. This judgment upon Old Testament Israel turns to a great blessing for the New Testament church, for the use of different languages is a sign of God's pres? dealing with many peoples of diverse tongues. But, says Robertson, this was a sign which was used only once to indicate God's change in His dealings with His people. Such a sign is not needed after it has served its purpose. It showed God's grace to many peoples; now that sign is not needed to remind us again and again of that gracious revelation of God to all His people. Therefore we do not need the gift of tongues today. It was a sign in the early church to indicate God's new direction from dealing only with Israel, to opening His revelation to all peoples and languages.

Religious Fanaticism

Rev. Iain Murray, editor of *The Banner of Truth*, spoke on the work of the Holy Spirit today and the excesses that have accompanied that work in the past. The Scriptures show that when the Holy Spirit works in the hearts of His people to awaken them spiritually, the immediate response is one of trembling fear. This is always the case. We find this emphasized in Isaiah 66 where the prophet says, "This is the one I esteem: he who is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at my word." This emphasis is found throughout the Bible. But false religion, Murray said, is always marked by a superficial assumption that it knows what God wants, and how He wants to be worshipped. It ignores the Word of God as the basis for all true religion.

Along side of the evil of false religion is the danger of religious fanaticism that often appeared during times of revival both in England and in America. This fanaticism originated among immature, enthusiastic Christians. It concentrated on phenomena, feelings, experiences, and excitement rather than upon the Word of God. It centered in the personality of a person, on his imagination. It often concentrated on one strand of Biblical truth, separating that strand from all the rest of Scripture. Most damaging of all, it was marked by spiritual pride that judged all who did not share that religious experience as being lesser Christians. Rev. Murray said that the antidote to religious fanaticism is warm, biblical, prayerful churches.

Preaching in the Spirit

Perhaps the most powerful message was brought by Rev. Albert Martin in a public meeting on the subject, "Preaching in the Spirit." The content of such preaching, he said, is substantially biblical, unashamedly doctrinal, pervasively

evangelical, and intensely practical. The manner of such preaching is earnest and impassioned, plain and lucid, controlled and powerful.

Observations

The Banner of Truth conference highlighted especially one truth, the absolute centrality of Scripture as the inerrant, infallible Word of God. A deep sense of awe was evident in the way in which all the speakers handled the Word of God. Every message was intended to point the listeners to the Lord Jesus Christ as the central content of that Word of God. What a refreshing change from what one often hears in other conferences even in the Christian Reformed Church. I would encourage our readers to attend the conference next year, the Lord willing, and urge your pastor to attend as well. Both he and his congregation will be amply rewarded.

Rev. Henry Vanden Heuvel, president of the Reformed Fellowship, is the pastor of the Bethel C.R. Church of Zeeland, Michigan.

Losing Your Temper FOR GOOD

Roger Kovaciny

Ever dig a grave with dynamite?

There are parts of West Virginia where you have to, because the topsoil is only a few inches thick and underneath is the limestone hillside. A friend of mine heard a tremendous explosion one morning—didn't surprise him, that's how they dig graves out there—but what did surprise him is that the explosions were repeated every twenty minutes or so. After a few hours he and his father moseyed on out to see whether half the town was being buried.

The new gravedigger was out there with a half-empty case of dynamite, tying six or eight sticks together and unrolling 200 yards of wire, putting on his hard hat, pushing the plunger, and then cowering on the ground, because the flying rocks were falling like bombs; then he went back, found the grave three inches deeper, and repeated the process.

My friend's father said, "Gimme a stick." He cut it in half, attached a cap, pushed it into a crack, rolled a boulder on top, stretched out six or eight feet of wire and touched it off with a flashlight battery. There was a dull "Whump!" and voila! A gravel pit eight feet deep, where only bedrock had been.

Old man Epling got more done with half a stick than an ignoramus got done with half a case.

As I listened to my friend tell the story, it occurred to me that this might be a lesson for those of us who are troubled by one of the most persistent problems the Christian has—anger.

Most Christians think of anger the way the dear lady who wrote "Eight is Not Enough" for the Northwestern Lutheran

thinks. She wrote about her most recent adoption, which involved an abused child. As she heard the stomach-turning tale, she said, "I prayed that God would take away my anger." Off course she did; in our ignorance, we the clergy have misled people into thinking that anger is a sin.

But don't you remember the familiar passage (Eph. 4:26, KJV) that says, "Be ye angry, and sin not?"

Anger and sin are two distinct things. And it is comforting to know this, because Jesus was angry. If anger per se were sinful, Jesus could not be our Savior. St. Mark tells us (3:5): "Jesus looked around at them IN ANGER and, deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts, said to the man, 'Stretch out your hand.' He stretched it out, and his hand was completely restored."

Jesus was angry, yet committed no sin.

You may wonder how this can be. You probably think of your anger as a shortcoming, a vice, a fault, a great liability. That's how the nice lady with all the children thought of it. That's because she was taught to do so. And I do not criticize her or those who taught her that, because I myself have always believed the same way.

That is, until I got my hands on a marvelous book called *Make Anger Your Ally*, available for \$15 from Focus on the Family, Box 500, Arcadia, CA 91006. This book explained that a violent temper can be turned into one of your most constructive assets.

Now, anger by nature is not constructive, any more than dynamite is. Most people use anger the way the ignorant fellow used dynamite. He used 200 times as much as he needed; he didn't direct it properly; and people could have been badly hurt by his misuse. You have to use it the way my friend's father used it. He got more mileage out of half a stick than most people get out of half a case. He didn't waste any making noise. And nobody was going to get hurt.

That's because he contained it. And it's important for us also to bring our anger, like every other thought, into captivity to Christ; for the apostle James cautions us that "Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, for man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires." (Jas. 1:19)

Man's anger doesn't.

But God's anger does.

And God's anger, working through God's Spirit, which lives in Christians, can bring about great results. If we use our anger the way God intended it, it can be as constructive as dynamite instead of as destructive as dynamite. Anger is like dynamite, you know. Its primary effect is to destroy, but Alfred Nobel did not invent it to destroy. His purpose in inventing it was to destroy obstacles—evil things that get in the way of human happiness.

Picture a man trying to dig that grave with a hammer and chisel. It would have taken weeks of exhausting toil. A dollar's worth of TNT did it all in a moment.

Anger can have the same effect.

Sometimes there are enormous obstacles in our way, obstacles to human happiness and benefit, obstacles so huge that no one in his right mind would tackle them.

But an angry man is not in his right mind.

He is in a very special state of mind, given him as a gift by God, that enables him to take an obstacle that common sense would tell him he can never remove.

For example, take Don Wildmon, a mild-mannered Methodist minister who is so angry about pornography that he is taking on the seven billion dollar-a-year[sic] porno in-

dustry, the Mafia which is behind most of it, and all three networks—and he seems to be winning.

Take the mother who was so mad when her son was killed by a drunk driver that she founded M.A.D.D. (Mothers Against Drunk Driving). She's taking on the twenty billion dollar[sic] liquor industry and 50 state legislators AND the enormous inertia of an entire nation—and she seems to be winning.

Take Herman Otten, attacking religious liberalism in the Lutheran church, and getting precious little help and all too much criticism even from conservatives. Seems that he's winning, too.

That's what anger is like. It enables a single David to take on a million Goliaths, and win.

Unfortunately, most of us don't know how to use anger, so we usually bottle it up under the mistaken impression that that is the Christian ideal. We may wind up under a doctor's care for hypertension or ulcers or various psychosomatic illnesses. We may be like the Mississippi steamboats that tied down the safety valve to win a race, until the boilers blew the boat to flinders and scalded the skin off most of the passengers so that they died in agony. Most Christians' anger is like that, held in till it blows up, making noise, hurting people, accomplishing nothing.

But anger can be one of the most conservative forces in the world, if you use it properly.

How DO you use it properly?

We see how Jesus used His anger. When the Jews tried to block Him from a work of mercy on the Sabbath. He neither vented His spleen nor swallowed it. He didn't stand there bottling it up, with teeth clenched and stomach churning. He didn't explode in rage and cuss them out and hurt the people around Him. His anger gave Him the energy to remove obstacles to human welfare. His anger moved Him to heal.

The wrath of God was similarly controlled. It did not explode against us. It was contained—directed. Instead of sending us all to hell... for all eternity, His anger broke out against Jesus. But even this turned out for the good, because that burning anger destroyed sin's guilt and power. Now we can live for God, as we were created to do (Eph 2:10). We can do good works, for God's Spirit lives in us and through us. And sometimes that is an angry Spirit, wishing to destroy the evil around us, inciting us to righteous wrath.

You may think, "I'm just one person. I'm not Don Wildmon or Herman Otten. What can I do?"

One day my father and I were cutting the grass at our home about 50 miles from Chicago. Both mowers were going full throttle as we passed each other. The noise was almost deafening, but it was like nothing compared to the blast that made us drop the handles and whip around to look at the horizon. The blowup would have drowned out a sonic boom.

And off in the distance we stared in shock at the ugliest thing in the world.

It was a mushroom cloud.

"They've bombed Chicago!" my father stammered. "They've BOMBED CHICAGO!"

His mother lived there.

Well, we found out that it wasn't Chicago. It was the McHenry Fireworks Factory, six miles away.

One little spark got the rest of them going, and WHAMM!!!!

The significant thing about the McHenry Fireworks Factory was that in Illinois it was strictly illegal to make anything

larger than a 2 cent firecracker. By itself, each firecracker couldn't do much. But when they all "put in their 2 cents worth" at the same time, they had an impact that shook the county.

You may not be Don Wildmon or Herman Otten, but you can still get together with people like them. Your "two cents worth" will not add to theirs, like one firecracker going off after another; it will multiply with theirs, like many crackers going off at once. You can shake the county—you can shake the world.

There's a lesson here for those "lone wolf" Christians who think they don't need the church, its activities, or its fellowship. The most they can do is "pop off" when they lose their tempers.

But the Christian who works together with others, using his anger to remove obstacles and evil, may—if you'll pardon the pun—lose his temper for good.

Reprinted from the May 13, 1985 Christian News. Rev. Robert Kovachy is a pastor at Columbus, Ohio.



DR. CLOETE AND BISHOP TUTU

Recently there appeared a printed interview in "The Banner" by Robert Rozema and Dr. Cloete on the subject of South Africa and the policy of equal but separate development of the races. In the interview reference was made to an article of mine that had previously appeared in both *The Banner* and the *Outlook*. A brief response to their statements is appropriate. Although, it would be an interesting exercise to dissect Dr. Cloete's statements point by point, space here necessarily limits any exhaustive analysis.

The one unalterable fact that remains for all to recognize, including Dr. Cloete, is that the present modern, sophisticated, economic grandeur of the Republic of South Africa has been the product of Anglo/Dutch industry and ingenuity. The blacks have no a priori claim in South Africa. From the nation of South Africa's very inception there was not a Bantu or Hottentot for a thousand miles, let alone any whose initiative contributed to the great commercial centers of South Africa. The black migration into South Africa, then as now, was primarily to benefit from this establishment. In fact, it is this continuing migration that has made the internal passport system, to which Dr. Cloete refers so contemptuously, necessary as a method of tracking the influx. A similar provision has been suggested in immigration legislation before our own Congress relative to the migration across the Rio Grande.

Dr. Cloete rejects the notion that blacks be assimilated or "co-opted" into the present structure. To him this is unacceptable. What structure does he prefer? It was most disturbing to note that Dr. Cloete has aligned himself with Bishop Tutu. I wonder what the limits of Dr. Cloete's agree-

ment with Tutu are? His Nobel Peace prize notwithstanding, Tutu is a man with questionable credentials. He is a self-proclaimed Socialist who on many occasions has called for the violent destruction of the Capitalist Free Market system of South Africa and elsewhere. He recently descended into the black hole of Liberation Theology when he declared: "When I see an armed guerrilla I see the face of Christ."

In typical Socialist fashion, it does not bother Tutu to place the lives of hundreds of thousands of blacks in absolute economic jeopardy by calling for American disinvestment in South Africa. This, despite the fact that most blacks oppose it. The precedence for this, of course, is imbedded in Socialist ideology and was first implemented in the Soviet Union in the twenties when seven million Uzbek farmers and their families were intentionally starved to forceably bring about the miracle of Socialist collectivized agriculture. More recently it can be witnessed in Ethiopia where millions perish largely because of Socialist collectivization programs. No one would suggest guilt by association, but, it must be admitted, in view of the expressed philosophy of Bishop Tutu, that Dr. Cloete has chosen those with whom he would agree rather carelessly. Bishop Tutu simply serves to reinforce the assertion made before, that the problem in the Republic of South Africa is less Black than Red. Apartheid is the trigger word, Marxism is the goal.

Albert C. Wiersma
Grand Rapids, Michigan

SYNOD 1985

Our Synod has again flouted Divine authority by deciding in favor of placing women in church offices.

Dr. W. Hendriksen in his commentary on I Timothy 2:11, 12, alluding also to I Cor. 14:33-35, wrote, "Let not a woman yearn to exercise authority over a man by lecturing him in public worship. For the sake both of herself and of the spiritual welfare of the church such unholy tampering with divine authority is forbidden."

In Deut. 4:2 God commanded Israel, "Do not add to what I command you and do not subtract from it, but keep the commands of the LORD your God that I give you." This warning is repeated in 12:32, "See that you do all I command you; do not add to it or take away from it." In Proverbs 30:5, 6 we are also reminded, "Every word of God is flawless; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him. Do not add to his words, or he will

rebuke you and prove you a liar." The last chapter of Revelation (22:18, 19) gives us the same warning, "I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book. If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book. And if anyone takes words away from this book of prophecy, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book."

Now *The Banner* editor tells us that the Bible is temporally and culturally conditioned, explaining that what the Bible said was only for that time. The executive secretary of the women's committee is also quoted in the Grand Rapids Press as thinking that "this is the last year for the traditionalist," and that she confidently expects women to become elders and ministers. "It is not a question of how but when."

We are faced on one hand with the Bible's "Thus saith the Lord," and on the other with the lies like that of the devil to Eve when he assured her, in defiance of God's warning, "You shall not surely die" for disobedience. Whom are we going to believe and obey?

Peter H. Yonker
Dutton, Michigan

THUS SAYS THE LORD!

I have read many articles in a number of magazines about the Women-in-Office issue.

What strikes me in most (if not all!) of these is, that virtually nobody asks: "What does the Lord have to say about this?"

When I read I Cor. 14:37 it is obvious that *THE LORD* has given Paul clear instructions about conduct in the worship services in the churches and has told Paul what to say to the congregations and their ministers. These instructions can be read in the previous verses. In verse 33 Paul states that the *LORD'S* instructions were meant for all the congregations of the saints. With the same authority Paul instructs Timothy in I Tim. 3:1-12 concerning church government that deacons must be husbands of but one wife etc. Look also at II Thess. 2:15 and 3:4 and I Tim. 2:12. If, therefore, I take I Cor. 14:37 and 33 seriously, I ask myself the question if synod in its decision was not totally out of bounds, as *The Lord* had already given clear instructions to Paul. As I read in James 1:17 that God does not change, certainly all congregations of the Saints (I Cor. 14:33) means all the congregations of the C.R.C. That the Lord does not change, you can also read in I Sam. 15:29.

Look at the first question asked in human history. *The Lord* had spoken but the devil turned that around and asked: Has *The Lord* said? Later the Lord spoke to Noah and Abraham. How often Moses brought the commandments of the Lord to the Israelites! And how many times the prophets chastised the people of Israel with the *Word of The Lord*! Also in the New Testament the Lord spoke in the gospels and later through the apostles.

Let us turn back to the Lord and listen first to what He has said.

J. J. Buma
Edmonton, Alberta

Dear Rev. De Jong,

Is it possible that the Holy Spirit is trying to tell us something? We see the CRC deciding to permit women to serve as deacons and negate the authority of Scripture! We see a reaction movement starting such as the MARS Seminary. But the enrollment is minimal! Why?

Is it possible that the Holy Spirit is teaching us that we in the CRC must go back further. Back to the events that underlie our current turmoil!

It appears that the CRC chose to tear out several pages of Scripture back in 1892 when we accepted Abraham Kuiper's teaching of presumptive regeneration. He wrote in his *E VOTO* that the birth statistics and mortality statistics in Holland of 1888 showed that 50% of all children died before the age of 21! So he concluded that the Lord regenerated all of them because they were too young to decide for Jesus. *Ipsa facto* then it must follow that our infants may be presumed to be born again because the Lord is just.

He failed to check this rationale against Scripture when Jesus taught us to evangelize the covenant people, i.e. Nicodemus in John 3—"Ye must be born again." Therefore, we must go back to the Word and remind ourselves that our children are just as much objects of evangelism as the unchurched. We must add those pages of Scripture back into our Bible!

I have a child lost due to a miscarriage. I will see him in heaven. I can say this on the basis of God's promises. But that does not logically say that ALL children will therefore automatically be saved. When older they must receive Christ as their Savior! This is also in the Word.

So the phenomenon of drifting from the Word must be addressed over the movements of the last 100 years! and corrected! If this is not done in a radical way, there will be massive departure of our members to other fellowships.

Sincerely,
P. Sluis
27 Deerfield Rd.
Wyckoff, NJ 07481

A LOOK AT BOOKS

Commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism, Zacharias Ursinus (Reprinted 1985: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, Phillipsburg, N.J.) \$20.00

The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company is to be heartily commended for its recent publication of one of the classic works of the Reformation period. Dr. Zacharias Ursinus was (according to most scholars) the principal author of the Heidelberg Catechism. For over a decade he "lectured through" the Catechism year by year. Careful notes on these lectures were taken down by students and following Ursinus' death in 1583, David Pareus, a close friend and disciple of Ursinus, collated these, and produced what is — for all practical purposes — an extensive volume which perfectly reflects the understanding and teaching of an extensive volume which perfectly reflects the understanding and teaching of a primary author of one of our major Reformation symbols. The Rev. George W. Williard, translator of the work from the original Latin, remarks in his preface: "... as Ursinus was the Chief compiler of this symbol, he must always be regarded as the most authoritative expounder of the doctrines which it contains. Great exertions should therefore be made to have his Commentary placed in every family belonging to our Reformed Zion." This opportunity is once again available to us.

The cost of this one volume classic (superbly bound within a fine hard cover, printed clearly on heavy paper) should not deter one from purchasing this masterpiece. As a layman's guide to the systematic theology of the Catechism it is unsurpassed. It is brisk, succinct, full, and generally easy to understand. Certainly there are areas in which centuries of faithful theological development have offered improvements in our under-

standing of basic doctrines (e.g. regarding man as the image of God, rather than seeing "imago-dei" as part of man, cf. p. 31; regarding the use of the term "invisible church," etc.); yet these are overshadowed by Ursinus' penetrating analyses which still remain as standard defenses of Reformed (i.e. biblical) doctrine. The Commentary is outstanding because Ursinus did not shrink back from dealing with the tough issues: "Why did God permit the fall of the first sin of man?" (p. 35). "The question: Whether men as they perished in Adam, are saved in Christ, considered" (p. 106). "Whether there is any salvation out of the church" (p. 292). And where else can one find material on the Sacraments which can shed more light on the so called "Reformed view" than the 100 pages "Straight from the Podium" of the Master teacher who was once villified by his then fellow-Lutherans for his "Calvinistic views"?

I personally was most impressed with Ursinus' material on Catechism questions #92 - #115 which deal with the Law. Where we are today exposed to so much "fresh thinking" about the Law, it is helpful to be exposed to a full length treatment of the decalogue from this Reformed father. While the reader would obviously love to read more "present day applications" of the so-called "second table of the Law," the exposition of the first table is marked by penetrating comments with a wealth of immediate contemporary applications (e.g. Ursinus' general rules for understanding the *Decalogue* [p. 502 ff]; and "Principal Arguments of the Antinomians against the use of the Law" [p. 615 ff.] are "timeless" in their importance. See for yourself how little change there is in the perennial attacks on the historic Christian faith!)

No Reformed minister should be without this source work for doctrinal study. Elders, likewise, would do well to possess this companion to their particular volume of Creeds and Confessions (we hope that our present ecclesiastical scene has not decayed to the point that conservative Reformed and Presbyterian elders are without such tools for their work!) Laymen, in the same way, will find this a reliable guide for study. As an incidental value of the work, Ursinus' clear and careful teaching methods shine through the book, and provide a good model for the "old fashioned" — but never improved upon — lecture method of teaching. For a day which cannot be reminded enough to follow "the old paths where the good way is" (Jer. 6:16) — Ursinus' *Commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism* is a warmly welcomed reintroduction to an "old path" marked by love for and faithfulness to the doctrines of Scripture professed by the Church of the Reformation. Don't pass up the opportunity to buy it now!

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