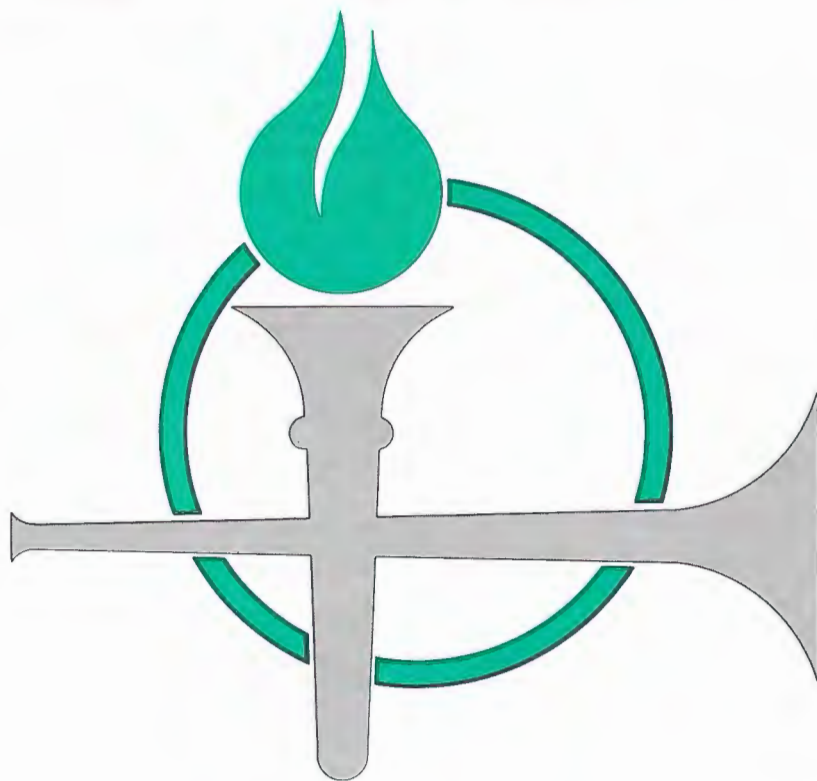


# THE OUTLOOK

---

DEVOTED TO THE EXPOSITION AND DEFENSE OF THE REFORMED FAITH

FEBRUARY 1986



---

**TENSIONS IN THE CHURCH**  
**EACH BELIEVERS OFFICE**  
**JOHN MURRAY**

# Rethinking Missions Today<sup>(2)</sup>

Bassam M. Madany

## Neo-Evangelical Missiology and the Christian Mission to Islam

### II. The Theological Perspective

Neo-evangelical missiologists would like the church to embark on new ways in missions to Muslims since they claim that the old methods of the last 200 years have been faulty. As we have noticed in Part I of this paper, a careful study of the history of the Christian-Muslim encounter during the last 1400 years does not sustain the thesis of these missiologists. The difficulties in the Christian mission to Muslims are not to be located in the alleged faulty ways of Western missionaries but in the Muslim tradition itself. From its inception, Islam was a consciously anti-Christian faith, and its basic motifs are anti-redemptive. But when we continue to study the reasons for this radical shift in the attitude of some Western missiologists toward Islam, we discover that the inspiration for the call to change does not come from a re-discovery of a thoroughly Biblical theology, nor from a fresh appreciation of the rich Christian tradition, but from an inordinate fascination with the new discipline of cultural anthropology. I will now dwell on this important point.

In his contribution to the Consultation on Gospel and Culture held at Willowbank in Bermuda, in January 1978, Stephen C. Neill began with these words:

Throughout history, religion and culture have been inextricably connected. There has never yet been a great religion which did not find its expression in a great culture. There has never yet been a great culture which did not have deep roots in a religion.

(*Down To Earth: Studies In Christianity and Culture*, edited by John R. Stott and Robert Coote, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, MI 1980. p.1)

In spite of this timely observation by a veteran missionary scholar, one could not help but notice among the many papers read at the Consultation a lack of a deep interest in the theological dimensions of the problems we face in missions among Muslims. Culture was regarded as the important bridge which will enable us to reach the Muslims with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is as if the "discoveries" of cultural anthropology have provided us with a modern Aladdin's lamp which will solve all our problems. This novel attitude is in marked contrast with the approach

of the pioneers. They did not confine their scholarly pursuits to the study of Islam, its history and its practices. They reflected theologically on Islam. One thinks, for example, of Samuel Zwemer's *The Moslem Christ*. An excellent and lucid study in the area of Islamic Christology and its implications for missions. Another classic is the monumental work of Prof. J. W. Sweetman: *Islam and Christian Theology: A Study of the Interpretation of Theological Ideas in the Two Religions*. This missionary scholar who labored most of his life in India shows the extreme importance of a deep theological reflection not only on Islam but equally on Christianity in its relation to Islam.

When we look at the contributions of scholarly men such as W. Montgomery Watt, we cannot escape noticing that the theological approach remains very prominent. In his book, *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought*, one notices the discussion of such theological themes as: God's Determination of Events, The Support in Tradition for Predestinarian Views, The Distinction between Iman (faith) and Islam, God and evil, the Createdness of the Quran, the Attributes of God, the Denial of Anthropomorphism and the Maturing of Sunnite Theology.

One more reference to a recognized historian, Bernard Lewis, formerly of the University of London, but now teaching at Princeton University. His writings on the history of the Middle East are filled with theological reflections. In the quarterly journal *American-Arab Affairs*, the following comments appeared in a review of Lewis' latest book, *The Muslim Discovery of Europe*.

In trying to account for this lack of interest in the world of Christendom, Professor Lewis offers two principal explanations, one historical, the other theological... The second explanation (theological) for the Muslim attitude derives from the politico-religious character of Islam. For the followers of Muhammad Islam is the final dispensation of a revealed truth. As such it logically engenders among the Muslim community a sense of ultimate fulfillment in being chosen to receive the final revelation from God through his Messenger the Prophet. As Professor Lewis suggests:

... the Muslim doctrine of successive revelations culminating in the final mission of Muhammed led the Muslim to reject Christianity as an earlier and imperfect form of something which he, himself, possessed in the final, perfect form, and to discount Christian thought and Christian civilization

accordingly. After the initial impact of eastern Christianity on Islam in the earliest period, Christian influences, even from the high civilization of Byzantium, were reduced to a minimum. Later, by the time that the advance of Christendom and, the retreat of Islam had created a new relationship, Islam was crystallized in its ways of thought and behavior and had become impervious to external stimuli, especially those coming from the millennial [SIC] adversary in the West. (American-Arab Affairs, Spring 1983, Number 4 p. 155).

While theology in Islam has not played the same role that it has in Christianity, and while the Sharia (Law) is more prominent in the mind of the Muslim than Kalam (theology), we may not jump to the conclusion that Islam is a non-theological religion. For example, when Muslims attack the Christian faith, it is always done in terms of the so-called theological and doctrinal errors of this religion. Consciously or unconsciously, Muslims give theological grounds for their instant rejection of the gospel of Christianity. In the light of all the foregoing considerations and having noticed how even secular scholars cannot but seek to understand Islam theologically, how are we to assess the words of the Rev. John Stott in his Foreword to *Down To Earth*? Writing about the meager results of missions among 600 million Hindus of India and the 700 million Muslims of the world, he remarks:

Although different answers are given to these questions, they are basically cultural. The major challenge to the world-wide Christian mission today is whether we are willing to pay the cost of following in the footsteps of our incarnate Lord in order to contextualize the Gospel. Our failure of communication is a failure of contextualization. (p. viii)

According to the Rev. Stott, we have hardly made any progress among Muslims because we have not made the right analysis which would have shown us that our problems are basically cultural! As if when dealing with Muslims, it is quite easy to separate the theological from the cultural. According to the Rev. Stott, the incarnation of the Son of God has become the proto-type for proper contextualization. And since we are not willing to pay the price of following in the footsteps of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, we refuse to contextualize and thus we fail to communicate the good news.

These are far-reaching charges. In my readings of scholarly works produced by non-evangelical Christians or by non-Christians, I see no such one-sided emphasis on the cultural aspect of Islam. Nor do I encounter the new jargon of some western missiologists. It pains me so much that it is some of my dear brothers in the faith who are espousing these novel theories and making far-reaching statements about failure of missions to the Muslims. That we must study and learn the cultures of the people to be reached for the Lord is axiomatic and has never been doubted by any serious missionary of the gospel. The first Western missionary to Muslims, Raymond Lull, did not go to his field of labors in Tunisia before learning the Arabic language and culture. He even lobbied for the introduction of the study of Arabic in the universities

# THE OUTLOOK

(USPS 633-980)



Published Monthly

July-August Issue Combined

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

## JOURNAL OF REFORMED FELLOWSHIP, INC.

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

**BOARD OF TRUSTEES:** Henry Vanden Heuvel, President; Edward Knott, Vice President; Arthur Besteman, Secretary; Peter Wobbema, Treasurer; Jay Wesseling, Asst. Secretary-Treasurer; Richard Blauw, John Engbers, John Piersma, Berton Sevensma, Harlan Vanden Einde, John Vander Aa, John Velthouse, Syburn Voortman, John Ybema, Peter Yonker.

Production Manager: Peter Wobbema.

Business Manager: Mrs. Mary Kaiser.

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

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

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

**Subscription Policy:** Subscription price, \$7.50 per year, \$13.50 for 2 years (Canada rates \$11.50 per year, \$21.00 for 2 years). Unless a definite request for discontinuance is received, it is assumed that the subscriber wishes the subscription to continue without the formality of a renewal order and he will be billed for renewal. If you have a change of address, please notify the Business Office as early as possible in order to avoid the inconvenience of delayed delivery. Include your Zip Code.

## EDITORIAL AND CIRCULATION OFFICES

THE OUTLOOK

4855 Starr Street, S.E., Grand Rapids, MI 49506 Telephone 949-5421

**Office Hours:** Monday, Wednesday, Friday 9-11 a.m.

After Office Hours - please call: 452-9519

Mailing Address: 4855 Starr Street, S.E., Grand Rapids, MI 49506

## Contents

February 1986 Volume XXXVI No. 2

Rethinking Missions Today (2).....	2
by Bassam M. Madany	
Women Deacons, Church Polity and Hermeneutics.....	5
by Fredrika Pronk	
Meditation — When the King Could Not Sleep.....	8
by John Blankespoor	
Tensions in the Churches.....	10
by Cecil Tuininga	
Who Am I?.....	11
by Glenn P. Palmer	
The Inspiration and Inerrancy of Scripture.....	12
by Richard J. Venema	
Bible Study — The Acts.....	16
by Henry Vander Kam	
God's Calling, The Office of the Christian Believer (3).....	20
by Peter De Jong	
View Point — Today's Hypocrisies.....	23
by J. Tuininga	
A Look at Books.....	24
Letters to the Editor.....	24



of Europe. Enough has been mentioned in the first part of this paper to show that the pioneer missionaries excelled in learning Arabic as well as the culture of the people. None of them ever dreamed of staying for one or two terms in the mission field. Their graves in Beirut, Cairo and elsewhere in the Middle East testify to their complete devotion to the cause of Christ. They respected the uniqueness of the person and mission of the Messiah and tried to model their missionary activities in the tradition of Paul and the other holy apostles, and not after an incarnational model!

Since Islam claims to be a revealed and theistic religion, are we right when we place so much emphasis on a cultural approach to Islam? As Stephen C. Neill observed when he was referring to the close relationship of history, religion and culture: "the church entered into easy relations with that culture only when the religion which underlay it had ceased to be a living force." But when we reflect on Islam, the words just quoted gain added weight. There is hardly an aspect of Islamic life and culture which has not been infused with the Muslim faith. It is impossible to separate between Islam as culture and Islam as a religious faith. Islam has shaped a uniquely Muslim world view.

When we reflect theologically on our subject and ask ourselves: what is the basic motif of Islam which distinguishes it from the Christian faith, we may come up with several answers. We may point to the traditional points of controversy such as: the authenticity of the Bible, the Trinity, the deity of Jesus Christ and His atoning death on the cross. Islam claims to have been sent from God in order to correct these false teachings of Christianity and thus bring true deliverance to mankind. While I do not want to deny that Islam is very self-conscious about this aspect of its mission, yet I would like to put forth the thesis that the basic motif of Islam is its teaching of the native goodness of man. This religion asserts that man can save himself and construct a peaceful world order by doing the revealed will of Allah. For us Christians, it is very important to realize that the Muslim religious tradition not only denies the crucifixion of the Messiah, but the very necessity of redemption. This important fact was impressed upon my memory over twenty five years ago upon reading an article in the quarterly, *The Muslim World*. The then-editor of the journal prefaced the article with these timely comments:

The following article is translated by permission from the first number of *Toumliline I, Principes d'Education*, Rabat, 1958, pp. 41-56, the journal of the Monastery at Toumliline, Azrou, Morocco. This small Berber town, situated some 70 kilometres south of Meknes, has in recent years become a symbol of Muslim-Christian theological meeting... The paper that follows was contributed in French during the second session of 1957 by Dr. 'Uthman Yahya, an 'Alim of Al-Azhar, Cairo. The general subject of the Conference was education. Dr. Yahya's exposition of Muslim theology and its concepts of man and his salvation raises several deep questions. The Christian

must always be perplexed about its ready confidence that "to know is to do," that man's salvation happens under purely revelatory auspices and that through the law given in the Divine communication is the path that man will follow once he knows and sees it. The whole mystery of human recalcitrance and 'hardness of heart' seems to be overlooked. (Man and His Perfection in Muslim Theology, *The Muslim World*, January 1959, p. 19)

Islam has always taught a doctrine of man which does not take into account the disastrous consequences of the fall. Once a Tunisian listener put it very cogently when he wrote: "When you speak about sins in the plural, I understand you; but when you speak about sin in the singular, I don't." Sin, in the sense of sinfulness or propensity to break the law of God, is foreign to the mind of a Muslim and has never been a part of his doctrinal tradition.

This unwillingness to reckon with the consequences of the fall has predisposed Muslims to welcome all theories which advocate the native goodness of man. In reading Arabic literature of the modern period (i.e. since 1800), one is reminded quite often of the affinity between the Muslim doctrine of man and that advocated by such men as Rousseau and Voltaire. Not that Muslims share the French writers' hostility to religion, but they found in them allies who had dissented from the Christian understanding of man. In Islam, man does not need redemption from the outside, for as the editor of the *Muslim World* explained the Muslim doctrine of man: *Man's Salvation Happens Under Purely Revelatory Auspices*.

Several neo-evangelical missiologists tell us that our past efforts among Muslims and others have failed. They place the reason for our failure in the cultural area. The implication of their claims are unavoidable. Contextualize, take this and that element from the Islamic way of worship and culture, and you will begin to succeed in your mission. Actually, this approach is very shallow and does not reckon with the theological subjects which are of great importance to Muslims. For no matter how much we contextualize the gospel message, the stumbling block remains: according to the fundamentals of Islam there is no need for redemption from the outside. The Quranic doctrine of God takes care of the acknowledged need for forgiveness. Allah is both Rahman (Merciful) and Raheem (Compassionate) and he forgives sins without recourse to the death of the Messiah.

Islamic culture, as we have already noted, is totally influenced by the Muslim faith. It is impossible to divorce the two. The difficulties in missions among Muslims are real and have been with us for fourteen centuries. At this late date in history, to suggest that we shift the emphasis from the theological to the cultural is to part company with a long standing Christian tradition. Furthermore, it offers a false hope that once the "magic" of contextualization has been put into action, success is guaranteed!

We are now ready to view from a Biblical perspective the main theme of some neo-evangelical missiologists, i.e., that Christian missions among Muslims have failed because of a lack of a proper cultural approach.

# Women Deacons

## CHURCH POLITY AND HERMENEUTICS<sup>(1)</sup>

Frederika Pronk

### I. Introduction

A recent article in *The Banner*, commenting on women in office, suggested that with this issue the Christian Reformed Church has entered a new stage of "tradition-forming" in Reformed church history, similar to that caused in earlier centuries by "the introduction of new forms of prayer or new words for the Trinity."<sup>1</sup> The question was asked: "Does the movement to include women arise from the Holy Spirit, offering a renewed way to understand and live out the Scriptures — and is it therefore something that ought not and cannot in the end be blocked? Or does it arise merely from the spirit of our own historical age?"<sup>2</sup>

Both positions are present in the CRC. On the one hand there are those who say that women are not given "full opportunity and equality" to use their gifts in the church and that the apostle Paul couldn't possibly have meant that "the consistory door and the pulpit be closed" to qualified women.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand one reads of a speaker at the 1985 Synod whose "voice shaking with emotion" asks, "What about our convictions that are based on the Word of God? Where do we go? What do we do?"<sup>4</sup> This pain was caused by a narrow margin of votes which decided "that synod not accede" to the request of a moratorium on women deacons because "such a procedure is not in harmony with the Church Order or Rules for Synodical Procedure, (Matters Legally Before Synod — Rules for Synodical Procedure, Church Order Arts. 28,30,31).<sup>5</sup> To salve the pain of those represented by the more than fifty overtures, protests and appeals received by synod, a pastoral letter was sent which noted "with deep regret that a divisive spirit" had arisen within the denomination and speaks of "our personal and communal pain."<sup>6</sup>

But more than a pastoral letter is involved in settling this issue which sets new precedents in the life and practice of a Reformed church. It is church polity which determines the implementation of decisions taken by synod. To implement the 1984 decision which Synod 1985 confirmed, a study committee was appointed with a mandate to "define the work of elders and deacons in such a fashion that the local churches will be assisted in carrying out the decision of Synod 1984, that 'the work of women as deacons . . . be distinguished from that of elders' (Church Order Supplement, Art. 3)." This committee was also mandated to "recommend such changes in the Church Order as are necessary to implement the findings and recommendation of the study committee."<sup>7</sup>

It is our contention that an overview of the fifteen-year-old history of women in ecclesiastical office indicates that the way this synodical decision will be implemented will not only affect Church Order, but could be a decisive turning point in the history of the CRC. For changes in church polity regarding women deacons and the future of Reformed hermeneutics are inextricably intertwined in the issue of women in office.

### II. History of Women in Ecclesiastical Office in the Christian Reformed Church

Women's issues are not new at CRC synods and show that the social conditions of the age have a bearing on the church's task in this world. Synods of 1914 and 1916 considered women's suffrage in civic life. They made no ruling, deciding that this was not an ecclesiastical affair. Questions regarding women's voting rights at congregational meetings surfaced at the Synod of 1947. No agreement could be reached and women were refused voting rights until Synod of 1957, which left it up to local congregations whether to implement this decision. A protest led Synod 1958 to rule that women voting at congregational meetings does not involve a ruling function, since the Church Order does not recognize the congregational meeting as an ecclesiastical assembly (C.O. Art. 26).<sup>8</sup>

Women's issues surfaced again when the "women's liberation" movement demanded equal opportunity for women in all areas of life. A stimulus was provided by a 1968 study report of the Reformed Ecumenical Synod which recommended member churches "probe further into the question whether or not all ecclesiastical offices should be opened to women." The report said that it "was not convinced of the unity of the offices or of such a concept of that unity which would preclude the entrance of the woman into the diaconal office which has been generally viewed among us as a non-ruling or service function. . . ." Because the RES report showed a sharp disagreement with Christian Reformed Church Order Synod 1970 commissioned a study committee "to examine in the light of Scripture, the general Reformed practice of excluding women from the various ordained offices in the church."<sup>10</sup>

Realizing that church polity and hermeneutics are interrelated, Synod sent back an earlier commissioned report on "Ecclesiastical Office and Ordination", requesting further clarification of the authority involved in ecclesiastical office.<sup>11</sup> An extended report "Ec-

clesiastical Office and Ordination" (Report 44) was presented to Synod 1973 and adopted with some modifications and Synod appointed a new committee on "Guidelines for Understanding the Nature of Ecclesiastical Office and Ordination".<sup>12</sup> At this same synod the "Report on Women in Ecclesiastical Office" was presented. This study committee concluded that "the practice of excluding women from ecclesiastical office cannot conclusively be defended on biblical grounds."<sup>13</sup> It also stated "that some very important hermeneutical problems (questions regarding the principles of the explanation of the Scriptures)"<sup>14</sup> were at stake. Synod decided that "the importance of this subject demands that we proceed with care (because) a long standing policy of this church is substantially affected by this report."<sup>15</sup> Thus a new study committee was appointed to further examine and evaluate the reaction of the church to the ordination of women.

In 1975 this new study committee presented the report "Women in Ecclesiastical Office" and stated that there was "support for instituting the office of deaconess, although this office is not clearly defined."<sup>16</sup> Also, "there is considerable concern that the church make all possible use of women in the work of the church outside existing offices."<sup>17</sup> The report recommended, "That Synod declare that the Christian Reformed Church is not ready or willing to open her offices to women", but that "Biblical teaching is not opposed in principle to the ordination of women to any office that men may hold in the church."<sup>18</sup> Based on this report a majority and minority advisory committee made recommendations to Synod. The majority report recommended that the practice of excluding women from the ecclesiastical offices recognized in the Church Order be maintained unless compelling biblical grounds are advanced for changing that practice."<sup>19</sup> It became evident to the majority of the members of the advisory committee that there were "underlying hermeneutical and exegetical difficulties in interpreting the relevant biblical givens... (and) also that various Reformed scholars do not accept the interpretations of the biblical givens advanced by those who wish to change the present practice."<sup>20</sup> Another committee, composed of Old Testament and New Testament scholars was appointed to "undertake a study of the hermeneutical principles which are involved in the proper interpretation of relevant Scripture passages."<sup>21</sup> Committee reports increasingly made it clear that hermeneutics was a key factor in deciding the women in office issue.

The 1975 synodical decision completed the mandate of the committee "Women in Ecclesiastical Office". No major synodical reports or decisions regarding women in office were made until Synod of 1978, but the women's issue was hotly debated. Synod 1976 declared that female M.Div. students should be waived from field education since present Church Order Art. 22 does not allow for this.<sup>22</sup> A flurry of activities was begun by the committee on "The Use of Women's Gifts in the Church" which later changed to Volunteer Resource Bank, a committee which was discontinued by Synod 1985.<sup>23</sup> An overture to

establish the work of evangelist as a fourth office generated some important studies on the offices. Noteworthy is a study report's statement that "the alleged relationship between the threefold office of Christ and the three offices known to us"<sup>24</sup> is called "a theological gloss of the New Testament, where support for this contention is lacking."<sup>25</sup> A minority report rejected the new office on the grounds that "proliferation of office in the church" would destroy the "three fold division of service that forms the foundation of the three offices of the Church Order, (which) may not be the only possible division one might legitimately have and be faithful to Scripture, (but) the fact is that this is the one we have."<sup>26</sup>

The landmark decision regarding women deacons came upon the findings of the "Report on Hermeneutical Principles Concerning Women in Church Office." This lengthy report, besides finding grounds for equal worth and full participation of women in the gifts of the Spirit and work of the church, took a lot of space to explain hermeneutical and exegetical principles.<sup>27</sup> Both a majority and a minority report recommended that the church permit women to be ordained as deacons. The minority report's recommendation, "That consistories be allowed to ordain qualified women to the office of deacon, provided that their work is distinguished from that of elders" was adopted by Synod. Article 3 of the Church Order was amended and ratification was requested from Synod 1979.<sup>28</sup> The same synod established the office of "evangelist" as a fourth office upon the grounds that "the Scriptures do not present a definitive, exhaustive description of the particular ministries of the church, and because these particular ministries as described in Scripture are functional in character, the Bible leaves room for the church to adopt or modify its particular ministries in order to carry out effectively its service to Christ and for Christ in all circumstances."<sup>29</sup>

The divisive nature of the women deacon decision became apparent at subsequent synods. Synod of 1979 saw a total of sixty-four printed appeals, overtures, personal appeals, and various communications.<sup>30</sup> Its response was to "review without prejudice the 1978 report on 'Hermeneutical Principles Concerning Women in Ecclesiastical Office' and the decision of 1978 regarding the ordination of women."<sup>31</sup> Synod instructed "consistories to defer implementation of the 1978 decision..."<sup>32</sup>

The period between 1981 to 1984, when the decision to ordain women deacons was reaffirmed, was marked by a flurry of activities. An overture to delegate deacons to major assemblies is referred to present studies on women deacons.<sup>33</sup> Women deacons who have been ordained may serve out their term, but churches are not to ordain any more.<sup>34</sup> The 1981 study report, "Synodical Studies on Women in Office and Decisions Pertaining to the Office of Deacon" contains much that is valuable in regard to the office of deacons and the historical development of that office. But neither the majority report, the two minority reports, or the advisory committee's recommendations were approved, and a new committee, this time to study headship, was appointed.



It should be noted that the minority report of a 1981 study report by Henry Vander Kam recommends, "That the practice of excluding women from ecclesiastical office be maintained."<sup>35</sup> Also the subsequent report of "Committee on Headship in the Bible" had a minority report in which Thea Van Halsema disagrees with women having "an ordained office," but urges the church "to acknowledge women's role as man's fitting helper in the church by establishing a position of 'assistants in ministry.'"<sup>36</sup> Alongside these voices to exclude women from all offices, are those who want to open all offices to women, so that it is proposed that Church Order Article 3 read that "Confessing members of the church (meaning both male and female) who meet the biblical requirements for office-bearers are eligible for office."<sup>37</sup> Between these two poles is Synod's decision that a study committee "define the work of elders and deacons in such a fashion that the local churches will be assisted in carrying out the decision of Synod 1984, that 'the work of women as deacons . . . be distinguished from that of elders' (Church Order Supplement, Art. 3)."<sup>38</sup>

### III. The Diaconate in Scripture and History

#### A. Scripture

When Synod 1984 reaffirmed its 1978 decision to open the office of deacon to women it did so on the grounds that "no study committee (1973, 1975, 1978, 1981, 1984) found biblical reasons to keep the office of deacon closed to qualified women."<sup>39</sup> Yet the recommendation is backed by very little Scriptural evidence. The grounds given in the 1978 decision are that, "There is some evidence in the Bible for opening the office of deacon to women. At least two passages in the New Testament (Romans 16:1 and I Timothy 3:11) indicate that women may serve as deacons (deaconesses)."<sup>40</sup>

But when one checks Reformed Bible commentators there is no unanimity that these passages refer to women in the office of deacons. The word "diakonos" as used in the New Testament can be used in a general term for ministry, but is also used in a specialized or technical sense for deacons (Phil. 1:1; I Tim. 3:8). If Romans 16:1 uses "diakonos" in the technical sense, Phoebe is a deaconess. The question is whether this was a position which was a special office, or whether it was a fixed position of service.<sup>41</sup> The only thing we can positively say is that "diakonos" implies that Phoebe was a servant of the church and as such "occupied a stable position, performed a definite and important function, in and for the church."<sup>42</sup>

As for I Tim. 3:11, there is even more of an ambiguity. Calvin comments that Paul "refers here to wives of both bishops and deacons, for they must help their husbands in their office. . . ."<sup>43</sup> Hendriksen believes that the women referred to here are not "the wives of the deacons," nor "all the adult female members of the church," but that "these women are here viewed as rendering special service in the church, as do the elders and the deacons."<sup>44</sup> Because this verse is "wedged in between the stipulated requirements for deacons, with equal clarity indicates that these women are not to be regarded as constituting a third

office in the church, the office of 'deaconesses,' on par with and endowed with authority equal to that of deacons." Hendriksen refers to I Timothy 5:9 for support that there were women who were "deacons' assistants" and "women who render auxiliary service, for which women are better adapted" than men.<sup>45</sup> It seems, therefore, not at all certain that women occupied the office of deacon. The only certainty we do have is that Scripture teaches that women had a function of helper in the diaconal ministry of the church.

1. Dr. Van Engen. "Christian Reformed Tradition," *The Banner*, October 28, 1985, p. 9.

2. *Ibid.*

3. Quoted from Lillian V. Grissen and others at the October 22, 1985 meeting of The Committee for Women in the Christian Reformed Church.

4. MM. "Women: Office Yes, Headship No," *The Banner*, July 1, 1985, p. 6.

5. Acts of Synod of the Christian Reformed Church 1985, p. 774.

6. Acts of Synod 1985, p. 775.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 781.

8. Gordon J. Spykman and Lillian V. Grissen. *Men and Women/Partners in Service* (2850 Kalamazoo SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49506: Board of Publications of the Christian Reformed Church, 1981), pp. 113-15.

9. Acts and Reports of the Reformed Ecumenical Synod (Amsterdam 1968), p. 34.

10. Quoted by Spykman and Grissen, *Men & Women/Partners in Service*, p. 116; cf. Acts of Synod 1972, pp. 37, 401.

11. Acts of Synod 1972, p. 95.

12. Acts of Synod 1973, pp. 61-64.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 587.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 585.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 86.

16. Acts of Synod 1975, p. 572.

17. *Ibid.*

18. *Ibid.*, p. 593.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 78.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 77.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 79.

22. Acts of Synod 1976, p. 54.

23. Acts of Synod 1985, pp. 612-13.

24. Acts of Synod 1976, p. 523.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 522.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 544.

27. Acts of Synod 1978, pp. 487-502.

28. *Ibid.*, pp. 532-33; cf. p. 104.

29. *Ibid.*, p. 77.

30. Acts of Synod 1979, p. 119; cf. pp. 6-7.

31. *Ibid.*, pp. 121-22.

32. Acts of Synod 1979, p. 122.

33. Acts of Synod 1980, p. 105-6.

34. *Ibid.*, p. 56.

35. Acts of Synod 1981, p. 531.

36. Acts of Synod 1984, p. 341.

37. *Ibid.*, p. 376.

38. Acts of Synod 1985, p. 781.

39. Acts of Synod 1984, p. 654.

40. Acts of Synod 1978, p. 104.

41. Colin Brown, Gen. Ed. *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, Vol. 3, s.v. "Serve" by K. Hess (Grand Rapids, Michigan 49506: Zondervan Publishing House, 1971), pp. 544-548.

42. William Hendriksen. *Romans* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1981), p. 500.

43. Calvin's Commentaries, II Corinthians, Timothy, Titus, Philemon (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1964), p. 229.

44. William Hendriksen. *New Testament Commentary, I-II Timothy-Titus* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, Baker Book House 1965), p. 132.

45. *Ibid.*, p. 133. Mrs. Pronk, the wife of the pastor of the Free Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan, is a student at Calvin Theological Seminary.

# When the King Could Not Sleep

John Blankespoor

"That night the king could not sleep" (Esther 6:1).

For one reason or another the king could not sleep. "So what?" somebody might say. "Doesn't this happen to millions of people every night?" It's common knowledge that people spend millions of dollars for sleeping pills to remedy this problem. Also that as people get older they don't sleep as well. Here a king can't sleep a certain night. Is this worth mentioning? I'm sure that President Reagan and Prime Minister Mulroney have nights like this too. But that is not made known to the public. It's not important enough to mention.

This incident is important, for it's the indirect cause of a turn of events that affects the whole history of the church of Christ. Solomon says that the king's heart is in the hand of the Lord as courses of water, directing it wherever He pleases. This sleepless night was controlled by the Lord, and let us thank God that it was.



To understand this apparently insignificant incident in the life of the king of Persia, we should recall the history of Israel.

Following the split in Israel under Rehoboam, the kingdom was divided into two kingdoms, those of Judah and Israel. The latter lasted 255 years and then was taken away into captivity by the Assyrians, never to return. Judah after 400 years was taken away by Nebuchadnezzar into Babylon. He deported all of the people, taking them away from their homes and all they had, and resettled them in far away Babylon (as Hitler at one time had plans to deport all of the Netherlands' people to Poland in the last World War). While Israel was in Babylon the Medes and Persians conquered the Babylonians and subsequently Israel was under the rule of the Persians. It was during the reign of Cyrus, king of Persia, that the remnant of Israel returned to the promised land. Jerusalem was rebuilt, including its temple. Here God continued His covenant though most of the Jews remained in the land of captivity.

In the course of time Xerxes, also called Auerus became king of Persia, ruling over that large area of the Middle East, which included the land of Canaan. Xerxes planned to have a large feast, in which all of the dignitaries of his empire would take part. It was

to last 180 days — a half year! Drinks apparently "flowed freely." At one time when the king apparently had drunk too much, he wanted to show to his many guests his beautiful wife, Vashti. He wanted her to be "put on display," perhaps in some kind of model show. But she refused. As a result, she was divorced and no longer queen. After all, the whole realm must know that no woman is going to treat the king with such disrespect and disobedience.

Now the king had to have another queen. Where would he find one? Following a long "beauty contest" in which each contestant had to spend one night with the king, Esther, a Jewish girl, was chosen to be the next queen. She kept her identity hidden, for the Jews were already unpopular. Helping her was her cousin Mordecai who had adopted her as an orphan.

Although Mordecai and Esther show much love for and loyalty to the Jewish people, the name of God is not mentioned once in the whole book of Esther. How different this is from the history and lives of men like Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah and others!

Haman, the king's right hand man, knew Mordecai and that he was a Jew. Haman hated him with a passion because Mordecai would not bow down before him. Haman influenced the king to make a law that on a certain day, the 13th of the 12th month of the year (Adar) in all of the king's provinces, i.e. in all of the empire, the hated Jews could be killed, young and old, women and children. Haman had a tall gallows made on which he wanted Mordecai to be hung. The next morning he would ask the king for permission to do so.

That night the king could not sleep. Orders were given that one of his servants read to him. Part of the king's diary was read. Providentially what was read was a record of how some time ago two men had tried to assassinate the king, their plans were known and exposed by Mordecai, and the king's life was saved. "What reward did Mordecai get", the king asked. The reply was, "None." Mordecai was given special honors for this deed of bravery and the king held him in high esteem. Just at that time, when the king was informed what Haman wanted to do with Mordecai, he, in great anger, ordered Haman to be hung on his own gallows. But the law remained that on the announced day all of the Jews could be killed. Because no law of the Medes and Persians could be changed,



the king made a new law that on that day the Jews could defend themselves and take advantage especially of those who hated them. The result was that that day became one of great victory for the Jews and became celebrated as a national holiday by them. This complete change in the course of history all started when the king could not sleep.

In all this we can and should see the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Remember that if the first law of the king had remained in effect all the Jews could be killed including the godly remnant in the land of Palestine. If Haman's request and wish had been carried out, all of the church would have been destroyed, including the royal seed from which Christ was to be born.

In the past the Lord had always saved His church. His promise "stood fast." The same thing would happen again. Not even the greatest kings would destroy His cause. He was faithful to His Word and will remain faithful. Sometimes He "works in mysterious ways His wonders to perform." Thus we see that the very sleeplessness of the king was by the Lord's appointment. The book of Esther, in the canon of the Old Testament, reveals to us this glorious truth. God will always save His church.

What security and peace God's people can find in this truth! His promises are still with us. He will always keep His church. The cause of Christ His Son, will always be victorious. We don't always see this, as the cause of the devil and the gates of hell often appear to have the upperhand. In many respects today, the cause of the church seems to be losing ground. Sometimes this is due to lack of spirituality in the church. But this is not always so. Think of the dark ages in the history of Europe. Today we can't help but feel concerned about our children, and grandchildren, when we think of the future. One doesn't have to be a pessimist today to see that the cause of the church in general is not flourishing.

We must not forget that our God controls even the times when kings and rulers cannot sleep. He controls their minds and hearts, as "river courses", says Solomon. Water has no resistance. The Lord controls all things, even the hearts of kings, presidents, prime ministers and dictators. God's control is all-embracing and all-comprehensive, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Although common people such as you and I are completely helpless regarding decisions and happenings in our countries and the history of the nations, our Lord controls even the sleeplessness of kings.

In His father-love the Lord counts the hairs on our heads. The Scriptures also tell us that He knows our sitting and rising, every time when we are going to sit down or stand up and go somewhere. He even

knows our thoughts from afar, even before they enter our minds. In view of these assurances about the very smallest details of our lives, Romans 8:28 takes on added meaning, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, that are called according to His purpose."

Taught such truths, we must be children of faith. We must not try to be "back seat drivers," and/or worry about circumstances which are beyond our control. In "quietness and confidence" we shall be strong, says Isaiah. And one of the psalmists wrote "Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him." We must try to confess the first words of Ps. 23, including the second part, "I shall not want." Each day our heavenly Father knows every ruler in the world, how many hairs there are on their heads, their motives and desires, their standing and sitting and their thoughts from afar. And He controls them all. "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!" (Mark 9:24).

## CORRECTION

The address given in the October Outlook for ordering *Current Issues In Foreign Missions*, by Richard L. Heldenbrand was incorrectly printed. This extraordinary little publication which was reviewed under the heading, "Battle for the Bible in Foreign Missions" clearly traces 40 years of missionary thinking. It may be obtained for \$1.75 by ordering from Rev. R. L. Heldenbrand, Route 8, Box 227, Warsaw, Indiana 46580.

## NOW AVAILABLE

*in booklet form for your study enjoyment*

### Lessons on the Parables

### Lessons on Genesis

*Chapters 1-11*

### Lessons on Ephesians

**\$4.00**

AVAILABLE FROM

REFORMED FELLOWSHIP

4855 Starr St. S.E.

Grand Rapids, MI 49506

# Tensions in the Churches

Cecil Tuininga

As long as the Church has existed on earth there have been tensions in it. That is so because it has many enemies without and within. Satan sees to it that there will be tensions. So why write about something so old and commonplace? We address ourselves to this subject because the cause of tensions today are unique, quite different from what the Church on earth has ever experienced before, as far as I know.

Recently a Canadian classis met in special session. Tensions in one of the churches had reached a stage where some kind of action had to be taken. The origin for these tensions was related to what many call today the charismatic movement (or spirit) that is invading many mainline churches today. As some seek to introduce this in its various forms and practices it elicits strong reactions, especially from the older members. Those advocating the spirit and practices of this charisma see it as a real blessing, a must if the churches are going to be alive in the Lord. Others see it as a tragic and sad departure from the spirit and practices of the historic Christian faith. This was the main cause of the tensions in this church.

What really happened to bring this kind of serious tension in this church? A classical committee investigating the problems reported that the beginning of these tensions centered in the "style of ministry" of the newly arrived pastor. "Irritations developed about certain issues, as the raising of hands during singing, the mutual greeting of members and visitors at the beginning of the worship services, participation of members in prayer, prayer requests, testimonies and the admonition from the pulpit to some young people not to sleep in church, etc., etc." Here was, according to committee reports, the beginning of tensions. It would bring us too far afield to enter into a discussion of all that happened to make it necessary for classis to call a special meeting. It is not my intention either to expose all the problems. I am concerned to address myself to the beginning of these tensions. The practices provoking criticism are being introduced into many of the congregations today. It is good for us to take a close look at what is actually happening when ministers in the Christian Reformed Church feel it important to make these kinds of changes. What are they after?

An answer is not hard to find. The minister involved opined that "It is this deadness — the lack of spiritual vitality within the congregation that I consider the heart of the problem. Stifled worship is but a symptom of the illness." He sees the congregation

as being in the grip of "conventionalism and traditionalism," and believes that the desire to hold onto things as they were 100 years ago stands in the way "to communicate effectively with each other and with those outside of our circles. . . ." Another judgment was expressed also, that those who want to see some necessary changes love the Lord, want to be obedient to the Lord for spiritual growth with a dependence on the Holy Spirit. If the church wants to keep these "alive" members it must give them the freedom to give expression to their joy in the Lord and make necessary adjustments also in our worship services — or especially there.

That our congregations are being troubled by such developments should not surprise us. We are indeed living in the very "last days" in which, Scripture says that church members "will not put up with sound doctrine" with the result that "they will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths." (2 Tim. 2:3,4) As I see it, the whole new "charismatic movement" has its origin right there. Church members no longer want to hear the truth. Doctrine is a very bad word. There is no real, meaningful study of God's Word. Hence the appeal for an easy-going and easy-to-understand message. With it comes a desire to see some visible evidence of faith, and to give evidence of that faith when worshipping together. The reasoning back of that is that if we are indeed letting the Spirit lead us the fruits should be visible. For that we need a more informal type of worship service where free expression can be given to the Spirit's work in the hearts of the worshippers. Hence the desire for more participants. And the freedom to lift up hands in songs of praise or in prayer, to give testimonies or speak in tongues. Too long, so we are told, have we held the Spirit's work in abeyance.

Those who advocate, or even push for, such changes in our worship services are sometimes very harsh in their criticisms of those who oppose them. They see this kind of change to be a must. If the church is going to fulfill its mandate and calling to itself and others, it is imperative that old practices go. They belong to a different age, and it is only too evident, or should be, that these no longer work. In this co-called "age of the Holy Spirit" we must be up and doing what the Holy Spirit leads and prompts us to be doing. No more of the dead traditionalism of the past but a vibrant Christianity for today. We are told that if we want to see growing and alive churches we will find them where people are allowed to give the Holy Spirit free rein. We can trust the Spirit to lead

us in meaningful worship, and in trust and obedience to the Holy Spirit, we will be enabled to do the work He expects of us.

That all of the advocates of this kind of change in the worship services would agree with the above summary is rather doubtful, but it does represent much of the thinking that is back of these new developments. That tensions result is only too evident. Why so? In the first place, because the judgment in it is harsh and cruel and completely unfounded. In the second place, it is leading Reformed churches away from the kind of worship our God demands of us. That the newly introduced practices are by themselves principal matters is a moot question, but the thinking back of them and the direction in which they seek to take us are. They fly right into the face of what is proper and reverent and what rightly belongs in a Reformed worship service. The older members, and some younger ones also, see that very clearly and rightly object to it. I praise consistories who resist this trend and am very disappointed with those who let their minister introduce all kinds of novelties. This is far from an innocent matter.

It is necessary to appraise this carefully. We must admit that practice often becomes law, and for that reason, we sometimes oppose all change. That is wrong. Change in practices is not always wrong and is sometimes demanded. But we must also weigh carefully why a change is wanted and to what it will eventually lead. In my opinion the present push for change stems from two things: One, already mentioned, a dislike for sound doctrine and, with it, a distaste for sound expositional preaching. And, in the second place, an apparent failure to know (or desire to know) what actually belongs to corporate worship and how it should be conducted. That inevitably leads to a desire for something different, something new, something exciting. We have apparently lost sight of the fact that when a consistory calls the congregation to worship it does so in behalf of, that is, in the name of, Christ, the King of the Church. And when the church assembles God is there with His blessings and presence. Accordingly, we sing, "God Himself is with us; let us now adore Him, and with awe appear before Him" (Ps. Hymnal #324). Proof. R.B. Kuiper stated it this way, "When God's people assemble for worship they enter into the place where God dwells. God meets them, and they meet God. They find themselves face to face with none other than God Himself. . . . If the church were fully conscious of that truth, what dignity and reverence would characterize its worship! Of levity and frivolity there would not be a trace" (*The Glorious Body of Christ*, p.347). And on page 350 we read, "It can hardly be denied that in their worship services God's children sometimes have evil aims. Not infrequently their aim centers on themselves, not on God. That makes their aim evil. Perhaps they go to church to have their craving for theatricals or entertainment satisfied. They want to see 'a good show' and have 'a good laugh.' Or, still better, 'a good cry.' For the minister the temptation is ever present to seek his own glory. All too often he looks for the plaudits of men rather than the divine approval." As I see it, that is precisely what we are experiencing. When the

real "stuff" goes out of Christianity, it becomes a superficial game in which each seeks his or her own desires. Hence also worship services become man-centered and not God-centered. Then we want to give vent to our feelings and to be seen as alive in the Lord, though we really don't know just what that means.

A final comment is in order. One hardly dares make it, for it is a harsh judgment. That is, that the whole charismatic movement stems from a failure to have a living faith. The Scriptures tell us that "terrible times" would come in the church and we experience them today. Scripture tells us that the reason for this is that there will be in church, members who have "a form of godliness but deny the power" (2 Tim.3:5). Members want to remake the church to their liking, but really don't know what it means to be repentent, sin-forsaking children of God. Hence the true, soul-stirring worship of the past means nothing and must go. Because of this we will see more tensions, more deviations from the heritage of the fathers, more churches forming that are distinctly unreformed in life and practice. And what answer can there be to all this? That ministers continue to preach the Word and the members hold onto what they have! Here Scripture's admonition is fitting, "Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you — guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us," (2 Tim.1:14) and, "Remember therefore what you have received and heard; obey it, and repent" (Rev.3:3).

## Who Am I?

Glenn P. Palmer

I am the first prophet whom the Bible mentions. Being a very godly and devout man (My Name means "dedication"), I prophesied:

See the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of his holy ones to judge everyone, and to convict all the ungodly of all the ungodly acts they have done in the ungodly way, and of all the harsh words ungodly sinners have spoken against him.

Who am I? Are you perhaps still stumped? I will give you four more hints:

1. My dad went by the name of Jared or "descent."
  2. When I was 65 years old I fathered a son who lived longer than any other man in this world — almost a millennium.
  3. I was the 6th generation after Adam.
  4. I was "commended as one who pleased God."
- Who am I?

Like all good Christians I went to church on the first day of the week, Sunday. Like all good Christians I went to the evening service. Like some good Christians I fell asleep as the missionary "talked on and on." Who am I?

Footnote: "Who Am I?" Genesis 5; Jude 14-16. Acts 20:7-9.



# The Inspiration and Inerrancy of Scripture

Richard J. Venema

To address you tonight on behalf of the Reformed Fellowship gives me great pleasure, as I am among like-minded Christians who are keenly interested in a subject, which in my judgment, touches a cancer that is eating away at the heart and mission of the Church in today's world.

I speak to you as a loyal son of the Christian Reformed Church. As my physical mother was God's instrument in bringing me into the world and nurturing me, God used the Christian Reformed Church to nurture me in the faith and to lead me to Christ. In that sense she is my spiritual mother and as such, I love her. For more than 30 years I have been privileged to stand in her pulpits. I have served on many of her boards and committees and even served for a time under her Boards of World and Domestic Missions.

Not only do I love my church; I thank God for all that she has been given. I embrace without reservation her distinctive traditions, practices and confessions to which she has clung for more than 125 years. I am convinced these are strengths and blessings which we should seek to maintain jealously. They represent a heritage we should enthusiastically pass on to our children and give to our world.

But a son who loves his mother, who fears she has symptoms of cancer does not keep silent. He does not pretend it is not there, try to cover it up or merely wish it away. He will speak out. He does not desert her, but rather he does all he can to help her even though it may disturb her. He does it so that her health may be restored and her life preserved.

To do that with my church manifests a lot more love, and is far more constructive than to keep our mouths shut and do nothing, or to lull God's people to sleep by deluding them into thinking that all is well in Zion.

I speak on "The Inspiration and Inerrancy of Scripture." Although there is nothing new in much of what I have to say, it may be helpful to rehearse again truths we have been taught before. My plan is to speak on (1) the confession we have historically made concerning the inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture; (2) the threat that is being made to this confession; and (3) the defense of this confession.

## (1) The Confession

I begin then with the confession we have historically made concerning the inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture. Before I state what that confession is, I

have a few preliminary remarks about it. As Reformed, we insist that our confession of the Scriptures is based on what these Scriptures say about themselves. In other words, our confession isn't formulated by what certain scholars may suggest it ought to be. Nor do we accept the truth and accuracy of Scripture because of certain scientific evidence theologians present to us. Our starting point is in God, in His Word which is the only absolutely reliable criterion for truth and falsehood in this world. Ultimately that faith, that trust in the Word comes from the Holy Spirit who moves us to confess with our Lord, "Thy Word is truth." He compels us to bow before the testimony of II Timothy 3:16, which says "all Scripture is God-breathed." Faithful Bible students have rightly pointed out that God didn't just breath into the Scripture some truth (as some modern theologians contend) but rather that the Greek construction indicates that God breathed out His truth. In the same way II Peter 2:21 affirms, "For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit."

That means that God is the primary author of the Scriptures. The trustworthiness and authority of Scripture come from God. The God of this Bible does not lie! Nor does He nurture His people with a Word that contains some truth and some error, a Bible which is absolutely accurate when it speaks about redemption but may well have contradictions and errors in it when it speaks about unimportant things like creation, a man Adam who lived in a real garden of Eden, an actual speaking serpent, an ax head that floated and a prophet by the name of Jonah who lived inside a fish for several days.

In the Form of Subscription which every deacon, elder, minister and seminary professor in the Christian Reformed Church has signed we say that our Reformed Confessions "do fully agree with the Word of God." We don't say, as some are suggesting, that this is what the Church in the 16th and 17th centuries regarded as true. We confess that these standards of Unity today too fully agree with the Word of God. "Heaven and earth may pass away but the Word of God abides forever." Therefore, we unequivocally confess "that we receive all of these books (of Scripture) as holy and canonical for the regulation and foundation and confirmation of our faith; believing without any doubt all things contained in them." Of these writings we confess "against which nothing can be alleged" (Articles IV & V of the Belgic Confession).

Our Reformed fathers never played games with that. They didn't hedge on that by making pseudo distinctions between the infallibility and inerrancy of Scriptures. They stood firmly in that tradition of *Sola Scriptura*. For them that meant that it was to the Scriptures alone that we owe radical obedience. The Scriptures alone are to be a norm for all of our life, including our theology and science. They never sowed seeds of doubt with such absurd statements as "to ask whether the stories of the Bible actually happened is to ask the wrong questions." For those men and women of God all the Scripture was true and trustworthy. That's why you find John Calvin busy writing, not just commentaries but also a harmony of the Gospel.

As a result, the church in which I was born and reared, from its pulpit and in its catechism classrooms taught us to confess very simply with the Compendium "By the inspiration of the Scriptures we mean that the Holy Spirit moved men to write the Scriptures and guided them in their work so they wrote the Word of God without error."

Therefore, we were also taught in our Seminary as well as catechism classrooms that these Scriptures were literally true in everything they said. In fact, they were also to be interpreted literally unless the context or the rest of Scripture demanded something else. For generations we were united in making these affirmations concerning the Word of God:

1. The Scriptures are *perspicuous*. That means they are clear and understandable. The believing child of God may be helped by a pastor or theologian but he is not dependent on him or the church to understand what God says.
2. The Scriptures are *verbally inspired*, which means that the guidance of the Holy Spirit extended to the very words of Scripture.
3. The Scriptures are *plenary inspired*, which means that this inspiration, this "God-breathedness" extends to every part of Scripture, to Genesis 1 to 11 as well as Matthew 28.
4. The Scriptures are *organically inspired*. As others have said before, this means that God used the total person as he was. In other words, God did not give us the Scriptures mechanically, by dictation, but rather He used human beings with their own peculiar traits and styles of language. Unfortunately, in our time some try to delude us with the notion that our Reformed fathers looked upon organic inspiration as a way of allowing for the creatureliness, the humanness of the Bible. That then is intended to mean that we should avoid an emphasis on the inerrancy and complete trustworthiness of the Bible in everything it says. To me, that is a distortion of the facts. The full truth is that our Christian Reformed Church historically was wholeheartedly committed to a confession that all of the Scriptures were God breathed in the sense that the Holy Spirit guided the human authors in all their writing so that they wrote the Word of God without error.

#### (2) *The Threat to the Confession*

That brings me to the second matter of which I wish to speak, the threat that is being made against this historic confession.

Anyone who has eyes to see and ears to hear, anyone who pays attention to what is going on in the theological and church world of today, including our own denomination, knows that we are engaged in what some have called a "battle for the Bible." Recently Gordon Clark, Professor of Philosophy at Covenant College in Lookout Mountain, Tennessee wrote a book about the Bible to which he gave the title *God's Hammer*. In its foreword we are told that "every generation of Christians has had its own doctrinal battles to face." In one way or another those battles centered around the doctrine of the Bible. That foreword goes on to remind us that Marcion already attacked the Bible. During the dark and middle ages the Roman Church tried to smother the Word of God with the words of men. In the 16th and 17th centuries there were the Council of Trent and the Enlightenment; in the 18th and 19th centuries there was the rise of rationalism, in which men again and again placed themselves, their minds and their reason above the Bible. The author of this book then says, "once again the battle is joined; this time with greater ferocity than ever before. It would appear that in this century the devil has honed both his intellectual and political weapons at unsurpassed sharpness. The simultaneous appearance of totalitarianism, neo-orthodoxy and a revived experientialism looms as the major threat to the church today."

John Warwick Montgomery, editor of the book *God's Inerrant Word*, tells us "opposition to unqualified Biblical authority has begun to erode evangelical testimony from within its ranks; and the importation of Barthian dichotomies has reinforced the natural tendency of pietistic fundamentalism to sacrifice the objective truth of Scripture on the altars of subjective experience."

As a result, we are witnessing a battle going on all over the world in once sound, orthodox and Reformed circles. Even seminaries which were established as champions of the faith, seminaries which should be on the forefront in challenging the subtle attacks of the devil on the Word of God are contributing to that attack in the name of scholarship. A good example is the work of Jack Rogers, a professor at Fuller Seminary (perhaps the largest evangelical seminary in the U.S.A.) who in his book *Biblical Authority* seems intent on establishing a view of inspiration which allows for inaccuracies in the Bible. For instance, he writes that we must recognize the creatureliness of the Bible and bear in mind that the purpose of the Bible is to warn against sin and offer us salvation in Christ. He then proceeds to tell us that the Scriptures infallibly achieve this purpose but for the rest we should not concern ourselves with the accuracy and inerrancy of the Bible. To defend his thesis he even uses the writings of such stalwarts in the faith as Luther, Calvin, Bavinck and Kuyper. But a careful reading of each of these men will show that in many cases they are quoted out of context, or contrary statements which they make are ignored. John Murray's book on Calvin's view on the inspiration of the Bible illustrates how unreliable and unscholarly Rogers' thesis really is.

Some years ago, a young student visited my office

and presented me a textbook used in the college she attended. This college claims to be Reformed. The preface of this text used in her religion class began with a quote from Porgy and Bess: "There comes a time when maturing young people discover the things they are liable to read in the Bible ain't necessarily so." And if you think this matter of Biblical inspiration and inerrancy is not a threat to the church, then witness the devastating effects this new view of Scripture and its interpretation has had on our sister churches in the Netherlands.

To say that this is not a threat to us is to delude oneself and hide one's head in the sand. Besides, I am convinced it is to delude the unsuspecting people of God. Back in 1978, Dr. Alexander De Jong authored a little pamphlet entitled "Christ's Church, the Bible and Me." In that pamphlet he challenged the writings of Dr. Harry Boer, for many years a missionary and professor in a seminary supported by our denomination in Nigeria. Dr. De Jong states that "the writings of Dr. Harry Boer in his book *Above the Bible*, the *Bible and its Critics*, and in the *Reformed Journal* underscore the sad fact that we in the Christian Reformed Church are deeply divided theologically on this crucial issue facing our denomination and the entire theological community." He even gives a quote from Boer's book in which he also admits that in the Christian Reformed Church there are two broad positions on Scripture.

A study of our history shows how this developed. In 1958, a seminarian wrote an article in a student publication of Calvin Seminary which challenged our historic confession on the Scriptures. At that time our seminary president in a guarded way defended some of the views expressed by this student by writing rather loosely about the "periphery" of Scripture. One of our Old Testament professors took strong exception to that, presented the matter to Synod, at which time our seminary president at least publicly retreated from his untenable position. Our denomination then produced a rather careful document on the inspiration of the Scriptures. But the problem remained as was evident when Reports 36 and 44 on the Nature and Extent of Scripture's Authority appeared. No one can deny that these reports said many true and worthwhile things. But even Dr. Boer admits that Report 44 is ambiguous on many points. Dr. De Jong shows how it allows some to use this report to "make room for expressed teachings which contravene our confessions; and contradict the express teachings of the Bible itself."

Since then we have had what the church has referred to as the Verhey and Libolt cases. Both of these men have taught in our seminary. Both of them received a recommendation for candidacy from a majority of the faculty of Calvin Seminary. In fact, some of the faculty openly defended the theological position of the one who did not receive the endorsement of Synod.

Who in the church today knows what one of our Old Testament professors believes and teaches about the Genesis accounts? The Acts of Synod of 1981 records that a committee of Calvin's Board of Trustees was informed by him that "because of the evidence

amassed by archaeologists and cultural anthropologists, Old Testament scholars have been led to conclude that it is not possible to harmonize those findings with the church's traditional interpretation of Genesis 1-11." Since that time no one, according to my knowledge, has been able to learn precisely what he believes about those chapters of the Bible. The person mentioned earlier who was not approved as a candidate for the ministry by Synod, but who has been licensed to exhort in one of our Classes has written an article in *The Banner* of August 25, 1982 in which he declared that the Genesis accounts are not to be read as history. He even asserted "that games have been played with the word *historical*. The word has acquired such broad meaning that every professor at Calvin Seminary can affirm the 'historical Adam,' though it is not likely that all of them read the Genesis accounts as straightforward history. I will make a modest suggestion: in the interest of clarity, let's drop the word *historical* altogether and simply say what we mean." In view of his having taught in Calvin College and Seminary he must have some competency as well as knowledge of what he speaks. Besides, I am not aware of any professor who has ever repudiated the clear implication of the *Banner* article.

Since October of 1981, the consistory of the congregation I serve in Chino, California, has tried to learn from both the seminary professors and the Board of Trustees precisely what they do believe on a number of matters relating to their view of Scripture. Despite the Form of Subscription declaration that they would always readily and cheerfully give an explanation of their "sentiments" on the doctrine of Scripture, to date we have not received any straightforward answers to such questions.

The Synod of 1984 clearly displayed where we are in respect to our confession on the inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture. This was most decisively revealed in connection with the discussion and decisions on the issue of women in ecclesiastical office. Already before Synod, the *Banner* editor informed us that, of course Paul in his writings did not allow for it. But then he dismissed what Paul under the guidance of the Spirit had said, because of cultural considerations. As a delegate to that Synod I did not hear one clear, positive Biblical defense made to change the historic stand of the church. In fact, one of the most able theologians at that Synod stood up, opened his Bible and read to us what he saw as a clear Word of God in defense of the nearly universally accepted practice of the church for two thousand years. As he concluded he challenged the delegates to show him where and how his interpretation was incorrect. The amazing thing is no one gave him a Biblical answer. Rather, Synod was emotionally deluged with such inane arguments as, "what if your granddaughter some day informs you that God called her to the ministry?" "If you were serving where the rubber hits the road, you would think differently;" "The Spirit is leading us into new insights."

In 1968, two of our brilliant young men wrote a little book entitled, *Understanding the Bible*. In it they wrote any number of excellent things which needed to be said. For instance, they pleaded for Biblical



preaching that would call us to wholehearted service to the Lord in all areas of life. They said that God's law requires radical commitment and total self-denial. To that I would respond with a hearty "Amen." But I have wondered where that radical commitment, that total self-denial is when we come to the issue of women in ecclesiastical office? Where is our bowing before and accepting what God Himself says about His Word?

If you read that book carefully, you will understand why these authors who often spoke about being "reformational" have not helped to bring about a reformation in our churches. In fact, I am convinced they and others have contributed to what I regard as a deformation of our churches. For instance, they make this naive but dangerous statement, "to ask whether the stories of the Bible actually happened is to ask the wrong questions."

All of this I see as a serious threat to our continuing to hold to a faithful confession concerning the inspiration and inerrancy of the Scriptures. That leads me to the third and final part of my address which has to do with our defense of this confession.

### (3) The Defense of the Confession

This needs to be emphasized because there are those who naively contend that the Bible needs no defense. What is even worse, we have leaders who ought to know better, deluding our people with such nonsense. Now of course, our God doesn't need me to defend Him or His Word. His Word abides forever! That stands, whether I give a speech or I do not give one.

But where do we get this notion that God's people should not speak out against false teaching? Who ever authorized us to remain silent in the face of teaching which undermines the faith and confessions of the people of God?

By all means, God can do without us. He can evangelize the world without our missionaries. He can prepare men for the Gospel ministry without any seminary. But the facts are that God chose to use men, and He uses our missionaries and our institutions of learning to equip His children for service in His Kingdom.

Let me give you several reasons why we are called upon to contend for and also defend this confession of the church on the Scriptures.

The first is that God demands it. He calls us to radical obedience, to total self denial also in upholding and propagating His truth. The Scriptures demand that we "contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3), that we "prove the spirits whether they are of God," that we "hold fast to that which we have," that no man "take our crown." No Christian who has been redeemed and loves the Lord can escape the word of Psalm 48 which says "Walk about Zion, go around her, count her towers, consider well her ramparts, view her citadels, that you may tell it to the generations following."

Secondly, our integrity demands our defense of this confession about the Bible. Our office bearers, our

ministers and professors signed a form of subscription. As we made our profession of faith and as we presented our children for baptism, we declared that we believe that the doctrines of this church are the true and complete doctrine of salvation. My conviction is that one of the biggest problems facing our church, one of the main reasons for our disunity may not be heterodoxy, but lack of honesty and integrity. As I mentioned before, since 1981, the consistory of my church has tried to learn what our professors believe and teach. They did so in good faith expecting to be treated as brothers in the Lord. But, for the most part, our professors have engaged in "stonewalling." As time goes by, I am increasingly becoming convinced that those seminarians may well be right who informed me that my consistory will never get forthright answers to our questions. For, if the professors were to give those, they would have a few problems, because our Christian Reformed Church isn't ready for that yet.

In any case, I believe, integrity in our commitment to God, to His word, to our church's confession, and in our signing of the form of subscription demands that we defend this confession concerning the inspiration and inerrancy of the Scriptures.

Thirdly, the effective, fruitful mission of our church demands it. Some years ago, a theologian who made no claims to being conservative authored a book *Why Conservative Churches are Growing*. He defended the thesis that churches which were committed to definite confessions were those who experienced growth in outreach and evangelism. An analysis of our evangelistic efforts in this country reveals that we aren't exactly turning the world upside down. In many of our domestic missions, despite the presence of several staff members, despite the millions of dollars spent, I fail to see the kind of growth we should expect from a faithful presentation and preaching of the Gospel. For four years I worked with American Indians in the ghetto of San Francisco. We grew from two members to twenty-two families in those years. Today, ten years later, that mission is dead. We have so much to give as a Christian Reformed Church. We have such a rich heritage. But instead of championing that which is distinctive to our Reformed world-and-life view we seem to have been caught up in an inferiority complex, of apologizing for, rather than excitingly proclaiming it.

Along with that development, we can also expect an erosion of our financial support of missions. As Dr. Alexander De Jong writes to Dr. Boer: "Why should I, and how can I in good conscience subsidize your mission?" Perhaps God's people cannot force our ministers and missionaries to maintain our historic confession of Scripture, but they will not long support generously missions or ministries which do not wholeheartedly declare "Thus saith the Lord."

Fourthly, the unity of our churches demands that we maintain and also defend this confession. I agree with Dr. A. De Jong when he states that on the Bible we are "a house deeply divided." In recent years, much has been said and written about polarization in the church. Our most recent Synod was pressured into sending out a pastoral letter as a way to retain as well

as regain our unity. But what can such a pastoral letter accomplish other than seek the peace of a cemetery? Who are those who are troubling Israel? To urge concerned members of our church to be silent and if nothing more reminds us of the play used in Jeremiah's day.

We have always maintained that our unity is a unity of faith. If the majority of delegates at the Synod of 1985 were seriously and genuinely interested in the unity of the church, why did they not give the clear, compelling Biblical evidence for the church's decisions on women in office, which hundreds of churches and many classes asked of the Synod? As long as the Scriptures are interpreted to conform to the sociology and anthropology of the contemporary feminist movement, and as long as we hear leaders piously repeating the refrain "The Spirit is leading into new insights," without giving compelling Biblical evidence for those insights, there will be no furthering of our unity.

That is why I want to add one more thought on defending our confession of the Bible. That is that the future of our denomination as a vital, strong and

vibrant church is at stake. I believe it was Francis Schaeffer who in a speech in Chicago said that this question of the Bible will be the "watershed" of the church and its future. But a greater authority on that point is the God in whom we profess to believe. In I Corinthians 14:8, Paul under the guidance of the Spirit, addressing the confusion in the church of his day, wrote, "If the trumpet does not give a clear call, who will get ready for battle?" Isaiah, the prophet, said to the church of his day, "to the law and to the testimony; if they do not speak according to this word, they have no light of dawn" (Isaiah 8:20).

To the church of Philadelphia (Rev. 3), our ascended Lord gave the promise "Behold I have given you an open door." Do you know why? He said "Because you have kept my Word." To that church and to us today He says "Hold fast that which you have that no man take your crown."

*Dr. Richard J. Venema is a retired Christian Reformed pastor at 1660 So. Oaks Ave., Ontario, California. This material was presented at meetings at Edmonton and Calgary, Alberta, Canada on Nov. 14 & 15.*

# the Acts

Henry VanderKam

## PAUL'S EARLY WORK AND PETER'S MIRACLES

### Lesson 11

### Acts 9:20-43

The way in which the early church was led is unmistakably the work of Jesus Christ. When at times it seems that the work of the church will soon be cut off, the Lord gives its whole history a new turn. What would the early church have been like without the conversion of Paul? What would have become of the mission work of the early church had not Paul stood at the head of the missionary endeavor? We can speculate about various directions the church might have taken, but the Lord watches over her and will cause her to flourish. There is really no scenario imaginable for the early church which would have taken it in a different direction from the one in which the Lord led her.

### Preaching in Damascus

Immediately after his conversion and baptism, Paul is ready to preach. This city of Damascus, which was to see one of his triumphs in destroying the church of Christ, becomes the place where he first preaches the gospel. He stays with the brethren for some time. He needs this after his recent experiences. Here, with the brethren, he is strengthened in the faith. This kind of communion he has never tasted before. Now it is time to get to work. How well is he qualified? His

classical education has been very good; his religious education has been thorough, but biased; and his present relation to the Lord gives him great boldness. He preaches in the synagogues, the places of worship, but also the places for disputation. Here he preaches, not some moralism, but — going right to the heart of the matter — proclaims that Jesus is indeed the Son of God! For the first time in his life he has a message! No longer will he have to teach the way the scribes taught. He now comes with the authoritative Word.

The reaction to the preaching of this man is understandable. All knew his purpose in coming to Damascus. He was going to waste the church. What has happened? He is now preaching the Word which they themselves believed. It is understandable that these people who are listening to him stand amazed. He is now using his considerable logic to defeat his former beliefs! Something unusual has happened. That all of them do not immediately flock to him is also understandable. They will have to get used to hearing this former blasphemer. But, this Paul is a remarkable man. He grows stronger in the faith and in the proclamation of the faith as time goes on. His knowledge of the Old Testament Scriptures enable him to best all the Jews who seek to debate with him. He simply slays them! He proves from their own Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ. The people in Damascus soon realize that they have a formidable antagonist in this Paul of Tarsus. What an addition to the group of the twelve!

However, this can't go on. Soon the Jews here in Damascus come to an agreement to get rid of this man. If you can't overthrow his logic, then overthrow the man who uses it. Again, they do not hesitate to make plans to kill him. It is amazing that this people who had been brought up on the law of Moses are so soon able to trample on the commands of God and be ready to kill someone whom they do not like or one who opposes them. Their plot becomes known to the Apostle. He does not give himself to a false piety and say "The Lord will take care of me," but moves to thwart their plans. The disciples in Damascus also realize the value of this man, and, although the opposition is watching the gates day and night, they let him down over the wall in a basket. We are reminded of the way the spies escaped from Jericho.

### **In Jerusalem — Gaining Acceptance**

On to Jerusalem. There are various problems which arise concerning the time Paul was in Jerusalem and the length of his stay there, as we compare this passage with Galatians 1. However, we are here only interested in the things Luke tells us about his coming to Jerusalem. Should not the brethren receive him with open arms? Perhaps so — but this does not happen. Apparently they do not know all the things which have happened to him since he has left Jerusalem. They do not trust him! A man who has done the things which he did had better show that he is a new man, and that over a period of time. The Bible is very realistic when it relates these things. It does not demand the unrealistic attitude demanded by many today. Besides, had not Jesus also warned them: "Not everyone who says Lord, Lord?" They are afraid of him and do not accept him into their circle.

However, a Barnabas, of whom we will hear so much later, does honor to the meaning of his name ("son of consolation") by bringing Paul to the Apostles and telling them what has happened to this man and how he has already preached the Christ at Damascus. This breaks the ice. He now "was with them going in and going out at Jerusalem." This is a Hebrew way of saying that he was now welcome in their company. But, though this is a big relief, this is not the most important matter. He has to preach! He preaches boldly in the name of the Lord and enters into debate with the Grecian Jews. He is well qualified to do so. They are no match for him. These, when they cannot win the debate, also seek to kill him. Then the disciples bring him on the way so that he may return to the city of his birth, Tarsus. In Chapter 22 he mentions the fact that the Lord commanded him to leave Jerusalem. That would be about the only way this man would leave his work. But, he should be alone a while and rest.

The "Apostle to the gentiles" has been chosen and equipped. Now the author leaves him for a time and shows us some of the other preparatory work which is being done for his life's work. The church has a time of peace throughout Judea, Galilee, and Samaria. The persecutor of the church has been rendered harmless. Now the church can be edified, can be built up. The brethren walked in the fear of the Lord and

in the comfort of the Holy Spirit. These times are necessary in the life of the church. It must consolidate its gains. And the church "was multiplied." The church must be strong in order that it may go out with the gospel of salvation to others. Missions? By all means. Building up of the church? By all means. The church which does not take care of itself and its own members will have no message for others. The Lord gives them this short time of peace.

### **Healing of Aeneas**

Although we usually consider Paul to be the Apostle to the gentiles, Peter also makes the claim that he was sent to bring the gospel to the gentiles (Acts 15:7). He uses the time of rest and of peace which the church is now enjoying to go to visit some of the places where the gentiles have come to be believers in Jesus Christ. What a blessing that these "outposts" may have the ministry of one of the Apostles for a while.

He goes to Lydda. There he meets with the believers, among whom is a certain Aeneas. This man has been helplessly paralyzed for eight years! The Lord often makes his children wait a long time for healing. But, healing has come to this city through the instrumentality of Peter. He declares to him that Jesus Christ is healing him. Therefore, "make your bed and get up and walk," so that it may be made evident to all that this declaration of the Apostle is not an idle word. All who see this miracle of healing in this town and the neighboring one believe. That is the purpose of the miracles performed by the Apostles. These acts reveal Jesus Christ in His divine power and they are used to instill faith in the hearts of those who witness them.

### **Raising of Dorcas**

Now the Apostle will go on to Joppa. The name of this city has become well known to Bible readers because of the various things done here and as the place from whence the Apostle is later called out for a very important mission. In this city is a lady by the name of Dorcas. She is not called a deaconess, but she does all the kinds of work which would be associated with such a position. She was "full of good works and almsdeeds which she did." A wonderful person; a person who would have many friends. She has given her name to many ladies' societies in the churches until today. She fell sick and died. They wash her body and lay it in an upper room. This was the custom of the Jews and was also an indication that the person was really dead. Peter is still at Lydda when this happens and they send from Joppa to him to come quickly. Why? Do they expect that this man who has healed the palsied will also be able to raise one from the dead? Apparently they do. Or do they merely want him to come to lead the funeral service? There is a touching scene depicted by the author. All the widows crowd around Peter and show him the various things this Dorcas has made for them while she was alive. How much they have lost through her death! There is no request made that he raise her from the dead, but, perhaps the hope is present.

Peter sends all of them out of the room. Jesus had done the same thing when he raised the daughter of



Jairus. Peter, however, must do it for a different reason. Jesus could simply take the child by the hand and command her to rise. Peter kneels down and prays. He must receive the power from Another. After the fervent prayer of this man of God, he turns to the body and commands Dorcas to rise. Notice how beautifully it is put. She opens her eyes; she sees Peter and sits up; he gives her a hand to help her rise completely! Now he can call those whom he has put forth only a little while before and present her alive to them!

Naturally, this episode becomes well-known throughout the city. Regardless of how large the city was, such a deed would be known very quickly from one end of it to the other. Also as a result of this miracle, many believe on the Lord.

Now there is added that Peter stays at the home of Simon, a tanner. Why he should stay with a person who makes his living dealing with many unclean things has baffled many commentators. I suppose that he stays here because this man is a believer and has room for him!

The gospel conquers. Not only in Israel but also among other peoples.

### Questions for Discussion:

1. Was Paul "reckless" in his proclamation of the gospel?
2. Was it right for the brethren to be afraid of him? Not to trust him?
3. Is it important that the church now has one who is able to confound the Greeks? Is scholarship necessary for the church?
4. Are the times of peace for the church to be received in gratitude? Or are they often times of real danger?
5. Do you think the Lord cut off the possibility of performing miracles too early in the history of the church?
6. Is it all right to speak of the "good works" which Dorcas did when these consisted of making clothes for others?
7. The effect is the same, but, is there a fundamental difference between the work of Christ raising the dead and the Apostle doing so?

## CORNELIUS CALLS FOR PETER

### Lesson 12

Acts 10:1-23

### The Obstacle to Gospel Outreach

Chapter 10 of the book of Acts is a kind of turning-point in the whole history of the early church and the mission of that church. Christ had been born of David's house. The Apostles were all from the Jewish people. It had been made clear that the gospel was first to be preached to the Jews. But the gentiles were also to be brought in. They too would share in the benefits of Christ Jesus. This had been foretold in the Old Testament (cf. Psalm 87, Isaiah 49 etc.). The question still remained: how was this to be accomplished?

Were the gentiles going to be brought into the New Testament church by the Jewish people themselves? This is not likely, because there were all manner of barriers between the Jews and the gentiles. Not the least of these was the ceremonial law of God! The Jews also considered the gentiles to be enemies. If the

gospel will not be brought to the gentiles by assimilation with the Jews, how will it be done? This was also a real question for the Apostles in the earliest times. They knew the word which included Jew and gentile, but, they also saw the law as forbidding the gentile from coming in unless he first became a Jew. This was a real problem in the early church. Judaizers threatened again and again to undermine the church. These people did not understand the gospel of Christ. Their tradition, although understandable, created many difficulties in the church.

The only way out of the difficulties would be through the Lord's direct revelations concerning this matter. This chapter bears witness to that fact. It had to be made clear to both the gentile and the Jewish leader. It had to be revealed more clearly than before. The gentiles will come! Whether the way is understood or not, God will not allow His purposes to be thwarted. All nations shall serve Him. All men shall call Him blessed.

### Cornelius' Vision

The ways of the Lord are strange. Certain episodes have already pointed to the fact that the gospel is also for the gentiles, but here it is made clearer than ever before. And, it is made clear through an individual who, up to this time, is totally unknown. In Caesarea, the great city which Herod the Great built and then named after his sovereign, there is a Roman officer, not a highly placed officer, but one who is in charge of one hundred men. This man, unknown to the Apostles, is a devout man who fears God with all his house, gives alms to the people and spends much time in prayer. Among the gentiles there was often a feeling of total emptiness. How could the gods of Rome give comfort to anyone? Some of these turned to the Jewish religion. Here was something far more substantial than that to which they were accustomed. The Jews served a God in whom they trusted. Their religion went far back in history. Their religion spoke to their everyday life. These were some of the attractions for some Roman soldiers who frequently came into contact with the Jews. In this worldly city of Caesarea the need for a strong religion was daily brought home to a thinking man. If an officer had any feeling for the soldiers under him, he would seek to lead them away from the worldliness of this place. Cornelius was the commander of an elite group — the Italian band.

Cornelius observes at least some of the customs of the Jews. He is engaged in prayer at 3:00 P.M., which is the usual hour of prayer. This prayer-time is different from others. He sees an angel, who addresses him by name. He is, of course, afraid! Even a priest in Israel was afraid when he saw an angel (Luke 1). He has enough presence of mind to ask: "What is it Lord?" He is told that his alms and his prayers have not been forgotten. They do not merit anything, but God has taken notice of them. Although his almsgiving and his prayers have not been in vain, they are not sufficient. What he needs is more instruction. Send to Joppa for Peter. Even if Philip, the evangelist, were in Caesarea at this time, only the Lord's Apostle is to be intrusted with this very important instruc-

tion. Would it not have been easier for the angel to give this instruction? The preaching of the gospel has been given to men! The angel tells Cornelius where Peter may be found.

There is no delay. As soon as the angel is gone, the officer sends two of his house servants, accompanied by a believing soldier, to carry out the task which had been assigned him. He tells them carefully all that has occurred and they leave at once. Notice that Cornelius has this vision during the time of the evening prayer and the following day at noon they are in Caesarea. This is a day's journey. They must have traveled all night.

### **Peter's Vision**

Something else is occurring at Joppa. The Lord works with a double revelation, as He had also done at the time of the conversion of Saul. Saul sees a man by the name of Ananias coming to him and Ananias receives the revelation that he must go to Saul of Tarsus. Something very similar to that occurs now. Peter goes up to an upper room at noon. He prays and falls into a trance. He is hungry and food is being prepared for him. The Lord has beautifully set the scene. By the time Peter's trance has ceased, the men of Caesarea are at the door. He has no time to think of other possible interpretations.

In his trance Peter sees a vessel descending from heaven. It is like a sheet or large table cloth and it contains all the beasts — four-footed and creeping, and birds. This is not the kind of container which looks attractive to him. It, no doubt, contains clean animals, but it also contains the unclean and virtually all the creeping animals were unclean. Notice that he is hungry. The fact that an enormous amount of food is brought before him in this trance speaks to him. He now hears a voice which He recognizes as the voice of the Lord. This voice tells him to arise to butcher and eat! What? Butcher and eat anything which is contained in this vessel? Never! He has been a faithful Israelite who takes the ceremonial law of God seriously. Leviticus 11 has made it very clear that there are many animals which the Israelite may not eat. Therefore his answer is instinctive: "Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common and unclean." Surely, he is not to be faulted for this stance. This is not only the way in which he had been brought up; it isn't only tradition; his Lord had so instructed him. Never had he heard that the ceremonial law had been abolished through the coming of Jesus Christ.

The voice of the Lord says to him: "What God hath cleansed, make not thou common." This is the first time such a revelation has been heard. Such a clear revelation was necessary to change the views of Peter and the whole people of the Jews. To emphasize the teaching even more, the Lord gives him this visual instruction three times! Then it is all taken back into heaven.

Peter thinks about the meaning of the vision for some time, because it is still not clear to him what this instruction implies. May he, who has never tasted anything unclean, now forget about the whole book of Leviticus? Has it come to this? Are all the things

which he has been taught to hold dear to be set aside? It is not surprising that this man is perplexed about what this vision might mean. Nor is the lesson of this vision going to make everything crystal clear to him for all time to come. Paul has to "withstand him to the face" (Gal. 2:11) later when he is forgetting the lesson learned on this occasion. But, the full light is beginning to dawn. This is clearly shown in the Pauline epistles. The Jews may not rob the gentiles of the freedom which they have in Christ. They will have to learn that "nothing is unclean of itself" (Romans 14:14). Every creature of God is good and is to be gratefully received, for it is sanctified through the word of God and prayer (1 Tim 4:4-5). Only the pure, however, are all things pure (Titus 1:15). The Apostles and the Jews must learn that there is room for the gentiles in the Christian church, even though they have not come by way of Leviticus!

### **Peter's Travel Orders**

The timing is beautiful! If Peter has some more time to think on the things he has seen, he might be led in the wrong direction. However, the men who have come from the house of Cornelius are standing at the door and are asking for him. Now is not the time for a vision. The Spirit tells Peter to go with these men. He may not doubt whether or not this would be the right thing to do, because, says the Spirit, "I have sent them!" He goes down to meet these men, but is still in the dark concerning the things which have taken place in Caesarea. He inquires why they have come. Now the whole story comes out. Already before Peter has had his vision, God has spoken to Cornelius and told him to send for Peter. "An angel told him to send for thee." Can you refuse that?

Now, of course, things are beginning to fall into place. Peter, the Apostle of Jesus Christ, must now go to the home of a gentile, but God has been at work there. This man fears God. He is righteous. All the Jews think highly of him. Could it be that that sheet full of animals, both clean and unclean, had something to do with the trip he is about to take? A wonderful experience awaits him in Caesarea.

### **Questions for Discussion:**

1. The Old Testament did make it clear that eventually the gentiles would also be brought into the fold. Why did this now become a problem?
2. How did such a man as Cornelius come to the faith? Was it true faith?
3. Was Peter right in not wishing to eat of the unclean animals?
4. Why do you think the matter was put to Peter in the way it was?
5. Why were some things clean and others unclean during Old Testament times?
6. Is it understandable that Peter slips away from this clear understanding later? Was it a shock to his faith to see no difference anymore between the clean and the unclean?
7. Can you see why the Jews had difficulty in welcoming the gentiles into the New Testament church? Can such changes come at command, or does it take a period of time to educate the people?

# GOD'S CALLING

## The Office of the Christian Believer<sup>(3)</sup>

Peter De Jong

### CHRIST'S BELIEVERS AND CHURCH

"Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved . . ." was the gospel promise brought by the Lord's missionaries. If I believe in Christ and so am restored in the office of believer to know, love and serve God as His prophet, priest and king, what, if anything, does this have to do with a church? This understandable question becomes the more urgent as an apparently increasing number of people in our time are answering, "Nothing at all." A missionary en route to China, when asked to what church he belonged, once answered that since he was saved he had not joined any. He suggested further that, serving a big interdenominational mission, he might be a more useful missionary if he were not tied to the practices of any one denomination. Many people, disgusted with the inconsistencies or bitter experiences they have encountered in some church, have decided that they can get along as well without joining any. After all, we can tune in on much more impressive radio and TV religious programs than we are likely to find in a local church. Why should one join any of them?

Although we might try to answer such questions by citing the benefits of joining a local church, we need to see that the only really decisive answers to them are those which the Lord Himself gave us. Since we are saved by believing in Him, we must be guided by what He said about the church. When Simon Peter made his famous confession of faith in Him (Matt. 16:16) He did not say that He would use this truth. Peter confessed only to save people. He said, "... upon this rock I will build my church . . . I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven . . ." (v. 18). This promise he repeated (in 18:18,20) regarding those who come together in His name.

This point was exceptionally well stated by Harry Blamires in his book, *The Christian Mind* (p. 119). "... Christians did not invent the Church: it is not something which they could either have had or not have had. We must not talk — and we must not allow critics of the Church to talk — as though the Apostles

sat round a table in the early days and one of them said, 'I propose that we have a church,' and another said, 'I second that,' and it was carried . . . For the Church was not manufactured to a human plan." "God made it, not man. He came to earth and left the Church behind him. Therefore, to talk of not seeing the need for the Church is like talking of not seeing the need for the moon. The Church, like the moon, is not a human project, but a divine creation." "God put it there. Speculators might argue that . . . God might have thought up some different instrument of salvation, just as he might have devised a different means of lightening our darkness at night. But where does that kind of speculation get us? We are not concerned with what God did not do: we are concerned with what he did. And one of the things he did was to come to earth and establish the Church."

The Lord's purpose with this church is especially clearly explained by the Apostle Paul in his letter to the Ephesians. In Chapter 2 he describes how God made men who "were dead in . . . transgressions and sins" and "by nature objects of wrath," "alive together with Christ," and saved them "through faith." The process does not stop with that. As a result of this they "are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellowcitizens with God's people and members of God's household," built into "a holy temple in the Lord . . . to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit" (vv.19-22). Christians are not left standing alone; as believers the Lord makes them (1) citizens of His kingdom, (2) members of His family, and (3) parts of His temple.

Accordingly, the Apostle Peter, to whom Jesus spoke about building His church, wrote in his First Letter (1 Peter 2:5) that men, coming to Christ, "the living Stone . . . also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. In other words, the "calling" and "office of the believer" may not be understood as individual and independent of that of all other Christians, but it has a place in and function as part of



Christ's Church. Each believer is part of a whole "people of God," "family of God," "temple of God."

Returning to Paul's Letter to the Ephesians, we notice that in the 4th Chapter he urges believers "to live a life worthy of the calling you have received" and to "make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace," considering that they form "one body."

Our oldest Reformed Creed, the Belgic Confession of Faith, simply reflects this teaching of the Bible when it states in its 28th Article, "EVERYONE IS BOUND TO JOIN HIMSELF TO THE TRUE CHURCH." "We believe, since this holy congregation is an assembly of those who are saved, and outside of it there is no salvation, that no person of whatsoever state or condition he may be, ought to withdraw from it, content to be by himself; but that all men are in duty bound to join and unite themselves with it; maintaining the unity of the Church; submitting themselves to the doctrine and discipline thereof; bowing their necks under the yoke of Jesus Christ; and as mutual members of the same body, serving to the edification of the brethren, according to the talents God has given them." "Therefore all those who separate themselves from the same or do not join themselves to it act contrary to the ordinance of God."

### A Key Text

The Fourth Chapter of Paul's Letter to the Ephesians is a key text that, perhaps more clearly than any other, helps us to understand the Lord's designs for the way the office He has given to all believers is to be developed and to function in His church. "...To each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it" (v. 7). In the church the ascended Christ (vv. 11ff.) gave "some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining the full measure of perfection found in Christ."

"Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work."

Notice that in the development of the office and work of each believer, a special role and office is assigned to "pastors and teachers." Similar special assignments are given in each church to "elders" or "overseers" and "deacons" (Acts 14:23; 1 Tim. 3; Titus 1:5-9). These "special offices" were given for the orderly, healthy development of the church and of each of its members toward fulfilling his or her "office" as a believer.

### A History of Confusion

Throughout the church's history much confusion and harm has resulted, and continues until the present, when the relationship between the "special

offices" and the "office" of each believer has been misunderstood or overlooked. The special offices have been regarded and sometimes even studied without recognizing their main purpose to develop the more fundamental office, that of each believer. What resulted from this neglect was often a caricature of the Lord's revealed design for His church. Does this appear to be overstatement? Let us quickly survey some of the developments in the church's history to see how it came about.

The Lord and His apostles from the beginning often warned His churches against the inroads of false teachings. Especially those in special offices must work to protect the church from them (Acts 20:28ff.) The early church father, Ignatius of Antioch, at about the end of the first century A.D., seeing the churches threatened by disunity and apostasy, wrote letters to several of them. He felt that a most effective way to protect the churches against these threats was to warn them to obey their bishops and to do nothing without the bishop's approval. He wrote the Smyrnaeans, "You should all follow the bishop as Jesus Christ did the Father." "Nobody must do anything that has to do with the church without the bishop's approval. . . Whatever he approves pleases God as well. In that way everything you do will be on the safe side and valid. . . But he who acts without the bishop's knowledge is in the devil's service" (8:1-9:1). Although we can appreciate the church father's undoubtedly excellent intentions, the direction of his counsel to suppress individual believers' exercise of office is unmistakable. When early in the church's history developments were taking this turn, it is not surprising that during the middle ages the church came to be commonly described as a ship operated by the clergy as crew, with the members merely going along for the ride (and paying the fare).

This state of affairs generally continued until the 16th Century Reformation. Then with Martin Luther there were indications of a change, as he was led by the grace of God to recover the Biblical gospel of salvation by faith in Christ, rather than clerical church ritual. As Luther sought to bring the church back to Gospel teaching he encountered very little support among the church hierarchy, and was driven to seek support from other Christians who might be in a position to help in the needed reform. The first of his three great 1620 Reformation tracts, *An Open Letter to the Christian Nobility of the German Nation Concerning the Reform of the Christian State*, appealed to them to take a hand in the reform of the church, pointing to their right to do so because all Christians are priests, as the Apostle Peter taught. It seemed that in this Reformation the office of the individual church member might begin to be properly recognized after it had been increasingly overlooked for centuries. The development of the reform movement speedily took a less favorable turn, however, when leaders of the peasantry, using the Reformation appeal to the Bible, began a Peasant Revolt that in 1625 threatened to become total anarchy. This kind of radicalism Luther strongly condemned. Calvin, as we have seen, stressed the calling and office of believers in society. While some of the more radical Anabaptist Reformers

seemed to accept this principle, their inclination to appeal to the direct leading of the Spirit rather than to the Bible soon led many of them to develop an authoritarian attitude and endless divisions among their followers.

The apparent promise of the Reformation to develop a more adequate Biblical appreciation of the office of the individual believer in the church and its relation to the special offices has been largely unrealized. Instead, we see, right up to the present time, on one hand, a traditionalism that differs in this respect very little from that of Roman Catholicism. That is strikingly exemplified by a 1965 catechism book by J.M. Snapper and G.J. Spykman, issued by the Committee on Education of the Christian Reformed Church. This elementary book, entitled *Teach Me Thy Way* and intended to acquaint younger children with key Christian doctrines, introduced the Church in a chapter on "The King's Officers." It devoted over two pages, including four illustrations, to "the duties of the pastor," who was obviously the main officer, a short paragraph of less than 9 lines and an illustration to "the duties of the elders" who were his helpers, and a similar brief paragraph and illustration to the deacons. The whole discussion concluded with a few lines answering the question, "What are my duties to the officers of the church?" Since the officers are Jesus' "servants" who do His work and "there is no more important work in all the world," our duty is said to be to "Pray for them and show respect for them." Even though the chapter concludes with a citation from Ephesians 4:11,12a, it is ironic that the quotation ends with "And he gave some to be . . . pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints," with never a hint that the whole concern of the passage and the purposes of the special offices are to help each member to serve in the more inclusive office of the believer! This was still "the forgotten office."

Although that book appeared about 20 years ago, there is no indication that the fault that it exemplifies has really been corrected. In fact, as we see some indications of a growing "professionalism" in the training of ministers and a tendency to cast them in the role of the churches' "executives," the caricature may be getting worse. Mark Gibbs and T. Ralph Morton in their 1964 book, *God's Frozen People*, rather aptly described some of the mischievous results of this mistaken view of special office. They quote Hans-Ruedi Weber (in *Salty Christians*), "Too often the clergy undertake to fulfil by themselves the ministry of the Church. And too often the laity delegate their ministry to the man, the clergyman. This 'one man show' is deeply unbiblical. Too many clergy and other Church workers fail to fulfil — or even to see — their main, specific function: the equipment of 'saints' for the ministry" (p.17). Later they add, "Without deliberate planning and certainly without any nefarious scheming on the part of the clergy, the congregation has developed a structure that depends entirely on the minister. . . most people will say that it is only right. . . that this is their job; for this they are trained. But . . . this is what is crippling the life of the church. . . the minister has changed from being

the one ordained to the ministry of Word and Sacrament to being in addition the director of the work and activities of a congregation" (p. 49). "No factory — no regiment — could survive if conducted on the system of the authoritative rule of one man. For a church which is a body of people called into the life and work of Jesus Christ it is disastrous" (p. 52).

If, on one hand, the life and work of the church, and of the minister in particular, are being crippled by this unbiblical and exaggerated notion of what one man, instead of the Lord's whole congregation, is supposed to be doing, they are, on the other hand also being handicapped by a growing reaction in an exactly opposite direction. Instead of seeing the life and work of the church mainly or only as those of special offices, many today are claiming that its life and work are only those of believers and that there is really no room for special — and certainly not authoritative — offices at all! That movement has drawn support from a 1972 C.R. Synod Report on Ecclesiastical Office and Ordination which tried to reduce special church offices to mere services and tried to eliminate from them any real authority. Despite a later synod's effort to correct that opposition to authority, the effect of this report has been to increase confusion about the roles of special offices and that of believers. Considering the present confusion about the proper responsibilities of special office in relation to those of each believer, we need hardly be surprised that some churches, including our own, are being driven to take extraordinary measures (even to the point of adding new denominational departments) to deal with the problems of a growing multitude of demoralized ministers.

### The Biblical Correction

The needed corrective for this spreading church demoralization is really neither complicated nor difficult. We need to return to the Bible in which the Lord revealed His design for the functioning of His church and its offices. (Problems in this area have arisen and continued to arise, exactly where or as the church, on whatever pretext — today the fad is to talk of the "time conditioned" character of the Bible and its proper interpretation — sees fit to ignore that guide. And real Reformation has always been by way of a return to that God-appointed Guide.)

Although, as we have been seeing, the Lord is restoring every believer in Him to office, the work of that office needs to be done, not independently, but in relation to the rest of His church (1 Cor. 12:7ff., "Now to each man the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good . . ."). In that church each believer needs to profit by the work of the special offices the Lord has given for his and her development. The Letter to the Hebrews (13:17) enjoins us, "Obey your leaders and submit to them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you."

At this point we may observe that God's Word restricts eligibility for the special church offices to men (1 Cor. 14:34-38; 1 Tim. 2:11-3:12; Titus 1:5ff.). We may not use what the Bible teaches about the office of each believer as an excuse to set aside what



it cites as "the Lord's command" about special office (1 Cor. 14:37), as many seem determined to do. Those who defy the Lord's order should not be surprised by the confusion and anarchy with which He sometimes rewards disobedience.

Although we are commanded to submit to church authority as representing Christ, this does not mean unconditional or unlimited submission to that authority. We must and may submit to it only as it is itself submissive to God's Word (Acts 17:11; Gal. 1:8; 1 John 4:1f.).

The Apostle Peter, to whom the Lord had spoken about His establishing His church and about how He would build it through the official work of His representatives, instructed and warned the church elders (1 Pet. 5:1ff.) "Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers — not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock." Notice the warning against three vices that have ruined official service throughout church history, laziness, greed and grabbing for power, and the proper corrective for each one of them! If those in special office serve in this eager and exemplary way and each member makes grateful use of that service, how can the church and its members fail to prosper?

In the November, 1956, issue of this publication, then called *Torch and Trumpet*, Rev. Martin Monsma, who was Professor of Practical Theology at Calvin Theological Seminary, wrote a twelve-page article about "The Believer's Office and the Church." That article — which at some points seems more up-to-date now than it was thirty years ago — although it is too long for extensive quotation here, lists some important rights and duties of believers within the church. It cites (1) their right and duty "to organize themselves into autonomous local churches"; (2) their right and duty "to judge as to the Church's doctrinal position and as to its ecclesiastical practices," including the right to protest and appeal against injustices or errors of church officials or assemblies; (3) their "right of reformation," including the "right of secession" when protests and appeals are disregarded by churches which are no longer faithful to the Bible or their confessions; and (4) "the right and duty of church members to take an active part in the activities of their church." Much more was said and can be said about these matters, but this summary highlights church members' official responsibilities, which are commonly overlooked and at times are even being denied by churches' growing bureaucracies.

We need to notice, not only what members may and should do to correct what has gone wrong, but, more positively, how each believer must seek to profit by the church life and activity and the special services of its officials, and how each must engage in the service of Christ to which all are called. That service includes a missionary responsibility to bring the gospel to others, and a broader, related duty to serve Christ in the world. The believer's missionary role and his or her place in society are subjects for future articles.



## TODAY'S HYPOCRISIES

(MT. 23:24)

The editor of the Question and Answer page in *The Banner*, Rev. Wm. D. Buursma, is generally quite flexible in his views. He is not one to dot the theological "i's" when it comes to Reformed orthodoxy. Far from it. The warning found in Rev. 22:18,19 does not really apply to the whole Bible, but is only a kind of footnote appended by the author to his own epistle in accord with the custom of the day (at least that's what "scholars" say). Halloween parties (which have a pagan origin) "can be perfectly innocent forms of entertainment for young people and children." The fact that preaching is not a part of evening services now and then in our churches is not a sign of liberalism. Author Buursma does not get too excited about such "minor" details.

But wait a moment. A CRC congregation does not allow women the right to vote at congregational meetings! Can you imagine? Now suddenly our otherwise unruffled editor becomes very indignant. He is "amazed" that there are still such backward congregations who espouse such a "rigid, fundamentalistic(!) reading of the Bible"! If this congregation continues its "defiance of synodical encouragement" then the questioner has a full right, even the duty (!) to seek another church. For surely this is the unpardonable sin!

Suddenly our latitudinarian editor has no latitude whatsoever. This is outrageous! Who ever heard of such a thing in 1985?!

Please note for a moment: That we have congregations who blatantly ignore and openly defy synodical decisions (not "encouragement," note well) by having "adjunct" or "associate" female elders is tolerated by our editor without a whimper; the same goes for a female "preacher" who occupies the pulpit in a CRC congregation in violation of all synodical rules. But woe to the congregation or consistory who denies women the right to vote. That is intolerable! Conclusion: Here you have a perfect example of "straining out a gnat but swallowing a camel!"

J. Tuininga, Lethbridge, Alta.





COLLECTED WRITINGS OF JOHN MURRAY, Vol. 4 *Studies in Theology*, published by The Banner of Truth Trust, 3 Murrayfield Rd., Edinburgh, Scotland EH12 6EL, P.O. Box 621, Carlisle, PA 17013, USA, 1982. Review by the editor.

After John Murray's death it was decided to publish a volume of his miscellaneous shorter writings. When those writings were examined in order to make such a selection, the single projected volume became four! There was just too much valuable material that could not well be excluded. The ten years since Professor Murray died have been showing how rare was the careful methodical study of God's Word to guide Christians and the churches that became the characteristic of his illustrious career at

Westminster Theological Seminary. These years have also been showing how urgently that kind of leadership is needed in our time. Through these writings his mine of Biblical studies over many years is made available to the students and ministers of our time and the future. Murray saw clearly that the direction of God's Word must take precedence over the pressures of tradition and the forces of change. In his own career his placing the Word of God ahead of the tradition in his own church barred the way to serving the ministry of that church and led the way to his return to the U.S. to eventually teach at Westminster. In our time when facing many pressing issues we are often torn between uncritically following traditions and uncritically abandoning them to surrender to changing public opinion, we can hardly find a better guide and example than John Murray to the way we must live in the light of God's Word. Few or no other books may prove to be more helpful to those who will study them than his writings. May they have many readers.

This last volume begins with a defense of Systematic Theology. That study must recognize the Bible as God's Word, not (with the Barthians) as a mere witness to the word. It must be both positive and negative, oppose today's destructive literary and historical criticism, study both word and deed revelation and be properly related to Biblical theology. This section is followed by studies of the inspiration of Scripture, and of Christology. Murray's little study on *The Free Offer of the Gospel* is probably the best answer one could find to those who deny it. Three chapters are reprinted from his valuable 1960 book on Calvin on Scripture and Divine Sovereignty, printed by Baker and containing lectures given to the Reformed Fellowship. The last part of this volume consists of reviews of significant books. One should not underestimate the value of these reviews. Among them are several which deal with volumes of Berkouwer's massive *Studies in Dogmatics*. I remember some of those perhaps 9-page analyses when they first appeared in the *Westminster Theological Journal*. It often seemed that Murray's careful, in-depth evaluations were of more real value than the ponderous and increasingly blundering studies under review. The churches needed the careful, clear, Biblical guidance that John Murray so conscientiously tried to give while he lived. They seem to need it even more now that he is gone. May the opportunity the Lord gives us to profit by his labors through his writings continue to be widely and effectively used. ●



October 25, 1985

In the past few months I received two anonymous letters. Generally anonymous letters are bitter, spiteful, and brimming with hate. Their writers are often filled with (self)righteousness but lacking in personal responsibility. That is why, as a rule, ministers wince when they receive such missives, especially if they suspect the author is a member of their congregation.

My anonymous correspondent, however, comes from out of the state. There was no return address, but the postmark at least told me that. The letters have been reasonable, even complimentary. There was not a hint of vindictiveness. The writer sent them in response to my article on congregationalism which was printed in a recent issue of *The Outlook*.

By means of these few words here, I would say that Reformed Christians should have the courage to stand up for their faith and convictions. Confidentiality is acceptable in matters of a personal nature, but anonymity is unworthy of the disciples of Jesus Christ. My anonymous correspondent can hardly expect me to give his ideas and suggestions much consideration, if he himself is unwilling even to put his own name to them.

As Reformed Christians we should be glad to take our stand publicly with the Lord. We should communicate in an upright manner (see Lord's Day XLIII) or not at all. Who knows? Perhaps in the near future I shall receive another letter, properly signed and even with a return address.

Rev. Gregg V. Martin, 259 Albion Rd., Rexdale, Ont., Canada M9W, 3P1.

# INDEX

VOLUME XXXV (1985)

by Rev. Jerome Julien

## AUTHORS

### BESTEMAN, ARTHUR

- Christian Reformed Synod of 1985 ..... 7:10
- In memoriam: Dr. Leonard Greenway, 1907-1985 ..... 11:21
- A significant meeting ..... 1:5
- What message? ..... 2:21
- Who causes disunity? ..... 1:21

### BLANKESPOOR, JOHN

- The beginning of the fulfillment of Christmas ..... 11:2
- The censer and Aaron's rod ..... 2:10
- The church alive with the Spirit ..... 6:4
- Encouraged to keep on running the race ..... 7:17
- Forgiveness unto fear ..... 9:2
- The Holy Spirit given ..... 5:2
- Like a baby craves milk ..... 8:2
- Pilgrims and strangers in 1985 ..... 1:10
- The secret of contentment ..... 10:4
- The sowing of our bodies ..... 4:4
- The unclothed Jesus ..... 3:2

### BOARD OF THE SOUTHWEST RURAL LEAGUE OF MEN'S SOCIETIES

- God's changeless word ..... 6:13

### BOETTNER, LORAINÉ

- The crisis in South Africa ..... 10:22

### BOONSTRA, JUAN S.

- "Useful idiots" ..... 2:12

### BRINKS, JOSEPH A.

- The real Bible ..... 11:6

### BRUINS, CLARENCE E.

- South Africa: the other side of the story ..... 10:23

### BYL, JOHN

- Regarding Bible and culture ..... 1:15

### CAMPBELL, JOHN

- The "Readers Digest" Van Til ..... 6:6

### DALLISON, ANTHONY R.

- Young people enjoy your youth ..... 8:22

### DE BOER, BEN

- Impressions of South Africa ..... 4:2

### DE JONG, NORMAN

- The Belgic Confession: a new translation or an illegitimate version? ..... 3:8
- The democratization of the church ..... 11:10

### DE JONG, PETER

- An Australian plea for Christian Schools ..... 8:19
- Bach and Handel: tricentennial ..... 3:21
- A Banner of Truth discussion on the Holy Spirit ..... 7:2
- Battle for the Bible in foreign missions ..... 9:13
- Battle of faith among our larger neighbors ..... 7:16
- Christian Reformed Synod agenda ..... 6:14
- The dated new left ..... 10:24
- Dealing with ethnic differences ..... 9:23
- Dodging denominational responsibility ..... 10:21
- False prophecy on a grand scale ..... 11:23
- God's calling: the office of the Christian believer (1) ..... 11:4
- How we know the things of God ..... 8:4
- In search of facts about defense ..... 3:12

- The manufacturing instructions for marriage ..... 7:23
- On the liberal track ..... 11:23
- Our South African debacle ..... 1:2
- Pastor Paula ..... 2:20
- Polarization and secession ..... 10:12
- Reformed Fellowship annual meeting ..... 11:8
- A reformer's tough assignment ..... 9:4
- The road ahead ..... 1:8
- Spotlight on South Africa ..... 4:22
- Tracing our Reformed roots ..... 6:10
- Worshipping another god ..... 5:14

### DE JONG, PETER Y.

- So you're delegated to Synod 1985! ..... 6:19

### DEN DULK, F. W.

- Visit to New Guinea mission ..... 4:21

### ELDERSVELD, PETER

- Choosing your preacher ..... 5:6

### ENGBERS, JOHN

- The three pillars of Christian education ..... 8:8

### GODFREY, W. ROBERT

- The Bible in the Christian Reformed Church:  
where are we going? ..... 7:4

### HAAN, NORMAN

- In the trenches ..... 3:22

### HARRIS, JUNE

- Impressions of South Africa ..... 1:4

### HEEREMA, EDWARD

- Does the form of subscription still function? ..... 4:10
- The sad story of an overture ..... 10:10

### HILL, WILLIAM E., JR.

- Lot, the man who vexed his own soul,  
the man God did not use ..... 7:14

### HOFMAN, J. SAMUEL

- A missionary looks at political revolution ..... 1:11

### HOOLEY, PAUL E.

- Being separated unto God ..... 2:11

### HULSE, ERROLL

- Why be negative? A comment ..... 5:21

### HULTINK, JOHN

- Out of concern for the Christian Reformed Church ..... 2:22
- Servant of the Most High: Louis Praamsma—  
1910-1984 ..... 3:14

### JANSEN, ANNETTA

- Prayer of thanks (poem) ..... 2:13
- Sowing in tears (Ps. 126:5,6) ..... 10:20

### JONES, NORMAN L.

- I attended a CAUSA seminar ..... 9:10

### JULIEN, JEROME M.

- The doctrine of last things: eternity ..... 2:18
- The doctrine of last things: the judgment ..... 1:6

### KAYAYAN, AARON R.

- Reformed Confessing Church of Zaire organization ..... 5:17
- The revocation of the Edict of Nantes, 1685 ..... 6:22

### KLOOSTERMAN, NELSON D.

- Moral leverage and church giving ..... 5:20

### KNODEL, RICHARD E.

- A tale of two preachers ..... 10:6

### KOERNER, MAYNARD

- Reformed opportunity and need in Zaire ..... 7:26

KOVACINY, ROGER	
Losing your temper for God	7:29
KWANTES, HARRY J.	
Hamilton Conference on Faith and Practice	7:8
LAMMERS, WARREN H.	
Is my mother still alive?	6:24
LANNING, RAY B.	
The full use of women's gifts	4:16
MACLEOD, DONALD	
Women, positively	4:9
MADANY, BASSAM M.	
Who are the Shiites?	9:6
MADANY, SHIRLEY W.	
The Biblical approach	5:8
MARTIN, GREGG V.	
Rethinking Congregationalism	8:12
MENNEGA, AALDERT	
Because of a banana peel	1:17
Early human development	9:22
Making sense in biology	8:6
Man's age	11:16
NEDERHOOD, JOEL	
Careful, careful!	9:8
OOSTENDORP, ELCO H.	
An unchristian requirement	2:2
OTTEN, HERMAN	
Christians and their pastor	5:4
PALMER, GLENN P.	
Who am I?	1:16; 3:9; 4:5; 5:23; 8:7; 9:12; 10:20; 11:17
PIERSMA, JOHN H.	
Another year is dawning in day school education	8:14
Comment and opinion	2:16,9; 4:14; 6:8; 7:18; 9:15; 11:14
Preaching the Word of God—C. Van Til	5:16
PRAAMSMA, RIEMER	
In memoriam: Louis Praamsma—January 1, 1910- December 2, 1984	2:4
PRONK, FREDERIKA	
The continuing battle against abortion	4:6
PULLIAM, RUSS	
A nineteenth-century reformer	7:27
SCHLISSEL, STEVE M.	
The daily paper	3:4
SHETLER, SANFORD G.	
Leaders with integrity	7:21
Women's role: a critical issue	6:21
SLIEKERS, HENDRIK	
Symptoms and victims of workaholism	8:20
SPRIENSMA, THOMAS	
Reflections on the 1985 Synod	10:9
SPURGEON, CHARLES HADDON	
The immutability of Christ	5:19
SZTO, PAUL C. H.	
Dr. Van Til at ninety: old guardian of a new apologetics	5:12
TOZER, A. W.	
The waning authority of Christ in the churches	3:10

TUININGA, CECIL	
A new curriculum	1:22
Our impressions of the Netherlands	8:10
When foundations are being destroyed	1:18
TUININGA, JELLE	
Attracting young people	2:23
Capital punishment	3:23
Conscientious objectors	2:19
The Contemporary Testimony	6:20
Denominational student aid?	11:22
Dutch admonitions to us	8:23
A little plain talk about the church	4:7
Methods of evangelism	7:24
No monopoly in minister training	6:23
Prune the bureaucracy	8:22
Reformed against Biblical?	7:22
Reverse discrimination	1:21
Separate Calvin College from the church	1:20
Synod injustice	10:22
Unrepresentative representatives	2:21
We believe without any doubt	4:8
When the church ignores the Bible	1:19
VANDEN HEUVEL, HENRY	
The Banner of Truth Conference	7:28
VANDER HART, MARK	
Report on the Northwest Iowa Chapter of Reformed Fellowship	7:25
VANDER KAM, ELAINE R.	
Henry Vander Kam: celebrating 40-year ministry	10:14
VANDER KAM HENRY	
The Acts	8:16; 9:19; 10:15; 11:18
Prayer	1:12; 2:14,15,8,17; 3:18; 4:18
VERDUIN, LEONARD	
Who should govern the church?	11:13
VOS, DOUGLAS	
Roman roads in the sky: a look at computer technology from a Reformed perspective	2:6
WALBURG, SIMON	
Television-itus (poem)	2:5
WOUDSTRA, MARTEN H.	
Joining WARC means the demise of the Christian Reformed Church	6:2
The peace of God	4:13
The World Alliance: final phase of the "courtship?"	3:6
YONKER, PETER	
About confessions and quotas	4:8
<b>ARTICLES</b>	
About confessions and quotas, P. Yonker	4:8
The Acts, H. Vander Kam	8:16; 9:19; 10:15; 11:18
Another year is dawning in day school education, J.H. Piersma	8:14
Attracting young people, J. Tuininga	2:23
An Australian plea for Christian Schools, P. DeJong	8:19
Bach and Handel: tricentennial, P. DeJong	3:21
The Banner of Truth Conference, H. Vanden Heuvel	7:28
A Banner of Truth discussion on the Holy Spirit, P. DeJong	7:2
Battle for the Bible in foreign missions, P. DeJong	9:13
Battle of faith among our larger neighbors, P. DeJong	7:16
Because of a banana peel, A. Mennega	1:17
The beginning of the fulfillment of Christmas, J. Blankespoor	11:2
Being separated unto God, P. E. Hooley	2:11
The Belgic Confession: a new translation or an illegitimate version? N. DeJong	3:8



The Bible in the Christian Reformed Church: where are we going? W. R. Godfrey	7:4
The Biblical approach, S. W. Madany	5:8
California church is removed from ALC roster	5:18
Capital punishment, J. Tuininga	3:23
Careful, careful! J. Nederhood	9:8
The censer and Aaron's rod, J. Blankespoor	2:10
Choosing your preacher, P. Eldersveld	5:6
Christian Reformed synod agenda, P. DeJong	6:14
Christian Reformed Synod of 1985, A. Besteman	7:10
Christians and their pastor, H. Otten	5:4
The church alive with the Spirit, J. Blankespoor	6:4
Comment and opinion, J. H. Piersma	2:16,9; 4:14; 6:8; 7:18; 9:15; 11:14
Conscientious objectors, J. Tuininga	2:19
The Contemporary Testimony, J. Tuininga	6:20
The continuing battle against abortion, F. Pronk	4:6
The crisis in South Africa, L. Boettner	10:22
The daily paper, S. M. Schlissel	3:4
The dated new left, P. DeJong	10:24
Dealing with ethnic difference, P. DeJong	9:23
The democratization of the church, N. DeJong	11:10
Denominational student aid? J. Tuininga	11:22
Dr. Van Til at ninety: old guardian of a new apologetic, P. C. H. Szto	5:12
The doctrine of last things: eternity, J. M. Julien	2:18
The doctrine of last things: the judgment, J. M. Julien	1:6
Does the form of subscription still function? E. Heerema	4:10
Dodging denominational responsibility, P. DeJong	10:21
Dutch admonitions to us, J. Tuininga	8:23
Early human development, A. Mennega	9:22
Encouraged to keep on running the race, J. Blankespoor	7:17
False prophecy on a grand scale, P. DeJong	11:23
Forgiveness unto fear, J. Blankespoor	9:2
The full use of women's gifts, R. B. Lanning	4:16
God's calling: the office of the Christian believer (1), P. DeJong	11:4
God's changeless word, Board of the Southwest Rural League of Men's Societies	6:13
Hamilton Conference on Faith and Practice, H. J. Kwantes	7:8
Henry Vander Kam: celebrating 40-year ministry, E. R. Vander Kam	10:14
The Holy Spirit given, J. Blankespoor	5:2
How we know the things of God, P. DeJong	8:4
I attended a CAUSA seminar, N. L. Jones	9:10
The immutability of Christ, C. H. Spurgeon	5:19
Impressions of South Africa, B. DeBoer	4:2
Impressions of South Africa, J. Harris	1:4
In memoriam: Louis Praamsma—January 1, 1910– December 2, 1984, R. Praamsma	2:4
In memoriam: Dr. Leonard Greenway, 1907-1985, A. Besteman	11:21
In search of facts about defense, P. DeJong	3:12
In the trenches, N. Haan	3:22
Is my mother still alive? W. H. Lammers	6:24
Joining WARC means the demise of the Christian Reformed Church, M. H. Woudstra	6:2
Leaders with integrity, S. G. Shetler	7:21
Like a baby craves milk, J. Blankespoor	8:2
A little plain talk about the church, J. Tuininga	4:7
Losing your temper for God, R. Kovaciny	7:29
Lot, the man who vexed his own soul, the man God did not use, W. E. Hill, Jr.	7:14
Making sense in biology, A. Mennega	8:6
Man's age, A. Mennega	11:16
The manufacturing instructions for marriage, P. DeJong	7:23
Methods of evangelism, J. Tuininga	7:24
A missionary looks at political revolution, J. S. Hofman	1:11
Moral leverage and church giving, N. D. Kloosterman	5:20
A new curriculum, C. Tuininga	1:22
A nineteenth-century reformer, R. Pulliam	7:27
No monopoly in minister training, J. Tuininga	6:23
On the liberal track, P. DeJong	11:23
Our impressions of the Netherlands, C. Tuininga	8:10
Our South African debacle, P. DeJong	1:2

Out of concern for the Christian Reformed Church, J. Hultink	2:22
Pastor Paula, P. DeJong	2:20
The peace of God, M. H. Woudstra	4:13
Pilgrims and strangers in 1985, J. Blankespoor	1:10
Polarization and secession, P. DeJong	10:12
Prayer, H. Vander Kam	1:12; 2:14,15,8,17; 3:18; 4:18
Prayer of thanks (poem), A. Jansen	2:13
Preaching the Word of God—C. Van Til, J. Piersma	5:16
Prune the bureaucracy, J. Tuininga	8:22
The "Readers Digest" Van Til, J. Campbell	6:6
The real Bible, J. A. Brinks	11:6
Reflections on the 1985 Synod, T. Spriensma	10:9
Reformed against Biblical? J. Tuininga	7:22
Reformed Confessing Church of Zaire organization, A. R. and C. Kayayan	5:17
Reformed Fellowship annual meeting, P. DeJong	11:8
Reformed opportunity and need in Zaire, M. Koerner	7:26
A reformer's tough assignment, P. DeJong	9:4
Regarding Bible and culture, J. Byl	1:15
Report on the Northwest Iowa Chapter of Reformed Fellowship, M. Vander Hart	7:25
Rethinking Congregationalism, G. V. Martin	6:12
Reverse discrimination, J. Tuininga	1:21
The revocation of the Edict of Nantes, 1685, A. R. Kayayan	6:22
The road ahead, P. DeJong	1:8
Roman roads in the sky: a look at computer technology from a Reformed perspective, D. Vos	2:6
The sad story of an overture, E. Heerema	10:10
The secret of contentment, J. Blankespoor	10:4
Separate Calvin College from the church, J. Tuininga	1:20
Servant of the Most High: Louis Praamsma— 1910-1984, J. Hultink	3:14
A significant meeting, A. Besteman	1:5
So you're delegated to Synod 1985! P. Y. DeJong	6:19
South Africa: the other side of the story, C. E. Bruins	10:23
Sowing in tears (Ps. 126:5,6), A. Jansen	10:20
The sowing of our bodies, J. Blankespoor	4:4
Spotlight on South Africa, P. DeJong	4:22
Symptoms and victims of workaholicism, H. Sliemers	8:20
Synod injustice, J. Tuininga	10:22
A tale of two preachers, R. E. Knodel	10:6
Television-itus (poem), S. Walburg	2:5
The three pillars of Christian education, J. Engbers	8:8
Tracing our Reformed roots, P. DeJong	6:10
Translation or illegitimate revision	10:21
An unchristian requirement, E. H. Oostendorp	2:2
The unclothed Jesus, J. Blankespoor	3:2
Unrepresentative representatives, J. Tuininga	2:21
"Useful idiots," J. Boonstra	2:12
Visit to New Guinea mission, F. W. Den Dulk	4:21
The waning authority of Christ in the churches, A. W. Tozer	3:10
We believe without any doubt, J. Tuininga	4:8
What message? A. Besteman	2:21
When foundations are being destroyed, C. Tuininga	1:18
When the church ignores the Bible, J. Tuininga	1:19
Who am I? G. P. Palmer	1:16; 3:9; 4:5; 5:23; 8:7; 9:12; 10:20; 11:17
Who are the Shiites? B. M. Madany	9:6
Who causes disunity? A. Besteman	1:21
Who should govern the church? L. Verduin	11:13
Why be negative? a comment, E. Hulse	5:21
Women, positively, D. Macleod	4:9
Women's role: a critical issue, S. G. Shetler	6:21
The World Alliance: final phase of the "courtship"? M. W. Woudstra	3:6
Worshipping another god, P. DeJong	5:14
Young people enjoy your youth, A. R. Dallison	8:22

## SUBJECTS

### ABORTION

The continuing battle against abortion, F. Pronk	4:6
Early human development, A. Mennega	9:22

## BANNER OF TRUTH CONFERENCE

- The Banner of Truth Conference,  
H. Vanden Heuvel .....7:28

## BELGIC CONFESSION

- The Belgic Confession: a new translation or  
an illegitimate version? N. DeJong .....3:8  
Translation or illegitimate revision .....10:21

## BIBLE

- God's changeless word, The Board of the  
Southwest Rural League of Men's Societies .....6:13  
How we know the things of God, P. DeJong .....8:4  
The real Bible, J. A. Brinks .....11:6  
Reformed against Biblical? J. Tuininga .....7:22  
Regarding Bible and culture, J. Byl .....1:15  
We believe without any doubt, J. Tuininga .....4:8

## CALVIN COLLEGE AND SEMINARY

- Separate Calvin College from the church,  
J. Tuininga .....1:20

## CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

- Capital punishment, J. Tuininga .....3:23

## CAUSA

- I attended a CAUSA seminar, N. L. Jones .....9:10

## CHARISMATIC MOVEMENT

- A Banner of Truth discussion on the Holy Spirit,  
P. DeJong .....7:2

## CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

- Another year is dawning in day school education,  
J. H. Piersma .....8:14  
An Australian plea for Christian Schools,  
P. DeJong .....8:19  
The three pillars of Christian education,  
J. Engbers .....8:8

## CHRISTIAN LIVING

- Because of a banana peel, A. Mennega .....1:17  
Being separated unto God, P. E. Hooley .....2:11  
Careful, careful! J. Nederhood .....9:8  
The daily paper, S. M. Schlissel .....3:4  
Losing your temper for God, R. Kovaciny .....7:29  
Lot, the man who vexed his own soul,  
the man God did not use, W. E. Hill, Jr. ....7:14  
Symptoms and victims of workaholism,  
H. Sliekers .....8:20

## CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH

- The Belgic Confession: a new translation or  
an illegitimate version? N. DeJong .....3:8  
The Bible in the Christian Reformed Church:  
Where are we going? W. R. Godfrey .....7:4  
Denominational student aid? J. Tuininga .....11:22  
Joining WARC means the demise of the  
Christian Reformed Church, M. H. Woudstra .....6:2  
A little plain talk about the church,  
J. Tuininga .....4:7  
Out of concern for the Christian Reformed Church,  
J. Hultink .....2:22  
Prune the bureaucracy, J. Tuininga .....8:22  
The road ahead, P. DeJong .....1:8  
A significant meeting, A. Besteman .....1:5  
When foundations are being destroyed,  
C. Tuininga .....1:18  
When the church ignores the Bible, J. Tuininga .....1:19  
Who causes disunity? A. Besteman .....1:21  
The World Alliance: final phase of the "courtship"?  
M. H. Woudstra .....3:6

## CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH SYNOD

- Christian Reformed synod agenda, P. DeJong .....6:14  
Christian Reformed Synod of 1985, A. Besteman .....7:10  
Dodging denominational responsibility,  
P. DeJong .....10:21  
In the trenches, N. Haan .....3:22  
Reflections on the 1985 Synod, T. Spriensma .....10:9  
The sad story of an overture, E. Heerema .....10:10  
So you're delegated to Synod 1985!  
P. Y. DeJong .....6:19

## CHURCH

- The democratization of the church, N. DeJong .....11:10  
Is my mother still alive? W. H. Lammers .....6:24  
A little plain talk about the church, J. Tuininga .....4:7

## CHURCH—AFRICA (See also SOUTH AFRICA)

- Impressions of South Africa, J. Harris .....1:4  
Our South African debacle, P. DeJong .....1:2  
Spotlight on South Africa, P. DeJong .....4:22

## CHURCH EDUCATION

- A new curriculum, C. Tuininga .....1:22

## CHURCH HISTORY—FRANCE

- The revocation of the Edict of Nantes, 1685,  
A. R. Kayayan .....6:22

## CHURCH—NETHERLANDS

- Dutch admonitions to us, J. Tuininga .....8:23  
Our impressions of the Netherlands, C. Tuininga .....8:10  
Pastor Panla, P. DeJong .....2:20

## CHURCH ORDER/POLITY

- Conscientious objectors, J. Tuininga .....2:19  
Denominational student aid? J. Tuininga .....11:22  
In the trenches, N. Haan .....3:22  
Rethinking Congregationalism, G. V. Martin .....8:12  
Who should govern the church? L. Verduin .....11:13

## CHURCH—TRENDS IN

- Battle of faith among our larger neighbors,  
P. DeJong .....7:16  
On the liberal track, P. DeJong .....11:23

## COMPUTER TECHNOLOGY

- Roman roads in the sky: a look at computer  
technology from a Reformed perspective, D. Vos .....2:6

## CONTEMPORARY TESTIMONY

- The Contemporary Testimony, J. Tuininga .....6:20

## CREATION

- Man's age, A. Mennega .....11:16

## DISCRIMINATION

- Reverse discrimination, J. Tuininga .....1:21

## EARL OF SHAFTESBURY

- A nineteenth-century reformer, R. Pulliam .....7:27

## ECUMENISM

- The World Alliance: final phase of the "courtship"?  
M. H. Woudstra .....3:6

## EDICT OF NANTES

- The revocation of the Edict of Nantes, 1685,  
A. R. Kayayan .....6:22

## EVANGELISM

- The Biblical approach, S. W. Madany .....5:8  
Methods of evangelism, J. Tuininga .....7:24

## EVOLUTION

- Making sense in biology, A. Mennega .....8:6

## FORM OF SUBSCRIPTION

- Does the form of subscription still function?  
E. Heerema .....4:10

## GIVING

- Moral leverage and church giving,  
N. D. Kloosterman ..... 5:20

## GOD—DOCTRINE OF

- Worshipping another god, P. DeJong ..... 5:14

## GREENWAY, LEONARD

- In memoriam: Dr. Leonard Greenway, 1907-1985,  
A. Besteman ..... 11:21

## HAMILTON CONFERENCE ON FAITH AND PRACTICE

- Hamilton Conference on Faith and Practice,  
H. J. Kwantes ..... 7:10

## HOLY SPIRIT

- A Banner of Truth discussion on the Holy Spirit,  
P. DeJong ..... 7:2

## HOMOSEXUALITY

- An unchristian requirement, E. H. Oostendorp ..... 2:2

## ISLAM

- The Biblical approach, S. W. Madany ..... 5:8  
Who are the Shiites? B. M. Madany ..... 9:6

## JESUS CHRIST

- The immutability of Christ, C. H. Spurgeon ..... 5:19  
The waning authority of Christ in the churches,  
A. W. Tozer ..... 3:10

## JESUS CHRIST—BIRTH

- The beginning of the fulfillment of Christmas,  
J. Blankespoor ..... 11:2

## LAST THINGS—DOCTRINE OF

- The doctrine of last things: eternity, J. M. Julien ..... 2:18  
The doctrine of last things: the judgment,  
J. M. Julien ..... 1:6  
The sowing of our bodies, J. Blankespoor ..... 4:4

## LEADERSHIP

- Leaders with integrity, S. G. Shetler ..... 7:21

## LIBERATION THEOLOGY

- "Useful idiots," J. Boonstra ..... 2:12

## LUTHERAN CHURCH

- California church is removed from ALC roster ..... 5:18

## MAN—CREATION OF

- Man's age, A. Mennega ..... 11:16

## MARRIAGE

- The manufacturing instructions for marriage,  
P. DeJong ..... 7:23

## MEDITATIONS

- The beginning of the fulfillment of Christmas  
(Luke 3:1,2), J. Blankespoor ..... 11:2  
The censer and Aaron's rod  
(Num. 16:47, 17:8), J. Blankespoor ..... 2:10  
Choosing your preacher (I Cor. 4:1), P. Eldersveld ..... 5:6  
The church alive with the Spirit (Acts 4:13, 18-20),  
J. Blankespoor ..... 6:4  
Encouraged to keep on running the race (Heb. 12:1,2),  
J. Blankespoor ..... 7:17  
Forgiveness unto fear (Ps. 130:4), J. Blankespoor ..... 9:2  
The Holy Spirit given (Acts 2:1-4), J. Blankespoor ..... 5:2  
Like a baby craves milk (I Pet. 2:2),  
J. Blankespoor ..... 8:2  
Pilgrims and strangers in 1985 (Heb. 13:14),  
J. Blankespoor ..... 1:10  
The secret of contentment (Phil. 4:12),  
J. Blankespoor ..... 10:4  
The sowing of our bodies (I Cor. 15:42-44),  
J. Blankespoor ..... 4:4  
The unclothed Jesus (John 19:23, 24),  
J. Blankespoor ..... 3:2

## MINISTRY

- Choosing your preacher, P. Eldersveld ..... 5:6  
Christians and their pastor, H. Otten ..... 5:4

## MISSIONS

- Battle for the Bible in foreign missions, P. DeJong ..... 9:13  
Visit to New Guinea mission, F. W. Den Dulk ..... 4:21

## MUSIC

- Bach and Haudel: tricentennial, P. DeJong ..... 3:21

## NEW YEAR'S DAY

- Pilgrims and strangers in 1985, J. Blankespoor ..... 1:10

## NUCLEAR WAR

- In search of facts about defense, P. DeJong ..... 3:12

## OFFICE OF BELIEVER

- God's calling: the office of the Christian believer (1),  
P. DeJong ..... 11:4

## PEACE

- The peace of God, M. H. Woudstra ..... 4:13

## PENTECOST (See also HOLY SPIRIT)

- The church alive with the Spirit, J. Blankespoor ..... 6:4

## POETRY

- Prayer of thanks, A. Jansen ..... 2:13  
Sowing in tears (Ps. 126:5,6), A. Jansen ..... 10:20  
Television-itus, S. Walburg ..... 2:5

## POLITICS—CHRISTIAN VIEW OF

- A missionary looks at political revolution,  
J. S. Hofman ..... 1:11

## PRAAMSMA, LOUIS

- In memoriam: Louis Praamsma—January 1, 1910-  
December 2, 1984, R. Praamsma ..... 2:4  
Servant of the Most High: Louis Praamsma—  
1910-1984, J. Hultink ..... 3:14

## PRAYER

- Prayer, H. Vander Kam ..... 1:12; 2:14,15,6,17; 3:18; 4:18

## PREACHING

- Preaching the Word of God—C. Van Til, J. Piersma ..... 5:16

## PRESBYTERIAN CHURCHES

- On the liberal track, P. DeJong ..... 11:23

## QUOTAS

- About confessions and quotas, P. Yonker ..... 4:8

## RACISM

- A tale of two preachers, R. E. Knodel ..... 10:6

## REFORMATION, REFORMATION DAY

- A reformer's tough assignment, P. DeJong ..... 9:4

## REFORMED ECUMENICAL SYNOD

- Unrepresentative representatives, J. Tuininga ..... 2:21

## REFORMED FELLOWSHIP

- Reformed Fellowship annual meeting, P. DeJong ..... 11:8  
Report on the Northwest Iowa Chapter of  
Reformed Fellowship, M. Vander Hart ..... 7:25

## REVELATION (DOCTRINE)

- How we know the things of God, P. DeJong ..... 8:4

## REVOLUTION

- A missionary looks at political revolution,  
J. S. Hofman ..... 1:11

## ROMAN CATHOLICISM

- False prophecy on a grand scale, P. DeJong ..... 11:23

## SCHISM, SEPARATION

- Polarization and secession, P. DeJong ..... 10:12



**SOUTH AFRICA (See also CHURCH—AFRICA)**

- The crisis in South Africa, L. Boettner .....10:22  
 Dealing with the ethnic difference, P. DeJong .....9:23  
 Impressions of South Africa, B. DeBoer .....4:2

**STUDY OUTLINES**

- The Acts, H. Vander Kam .....8:16; 9:19; 10:15; 11:18  
 Prayer, H. Vander Kam .....1:12; 2;14,15,8,17; 3:18; 4:18

**THANKSGIVING DAY**

- The secret of contentment, J. Blankespoor .....10:4

**THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION**

- No monopoly in minister training, J. Tuininga .....6:23  
 Synod injustice, P. DeJong .....10:22

**VANDER KAM, HENRY**

- Henry Vander Kam: celebrating 40-year ministry,  
 E. R. Vander Kam .....10:14

**VAN TIL, DR. CORNELIUS**

- Dr. Van Til at ninety: old guardian of a new apologetics,  
 P. C. H. Szto .....5:12  
 Preaching the Word of God—C. Van Til, J. Piersma .....5:16  
 The "Readers Digest" Van Til, J. Campbell .....6:6

**WAR**

- In search of facts about defense, P. De Jong .....3:12

**WOMEN**

- The full use of women's gifts, R. B. Lanning .....4:16  
 Women, positively, D. Macleod .....4:9

**WOMEN IN ECCLESIASTICAL OFFICE**

- Reformed against Biblical? J. Tuininga .....7:22

**WOMEN—ROLE OF**

- Women's role, a critical issue, S. G. Shetler .....6:21

**WORK**

- Symptoms and victims of workaholism, H. Sliekers .....8:20

**WORLD ALLIANCE OF REFORMED CHURCHES**

- Joining WARC means the demise of the  
 Christian Reformed Church, M. H. Woudstra .....6:2  
 The World Alliance: final phase of the "courtship"?  
 M. H. Woudstra .....3:6

**WORSHIP**

- Attracting young people, J. Tuininga .....2:23  
 What message? A. Besteman .....2:21

**YOUNG PEOPLE**

- Attracting young people, J. Tuininga .....2:23  
 Young people enjoy your youth, A. R. Dallison .....8:22

**ZAIRE—REFORMED CHURCH**

- Reformed Confessing Church of Zaire organization,  
 A. R. Kayayan .....5:16  
 Reformed opportunity and need in Zaire, M. Koerner .....7:26

**BOOK REVIEWS**

- Bolt, John. Christian and Reformed today (P. DeJong) .....10:18  
 Bratt, James D. Dutch Calvinism in modern America,  
 a history of a conservative subculture (P. DeJong) .....6:10  
 Cammenga, Ron. Women in church office (R. Blaw) .....3:24  
 DeJong, Peter Y. and Kloosterman, Nelson, D., eds.  
 The Reformation of 1834, essays in commemoration  
 of the Acts of Secession and return (P. DeJong) .....6:10  
 DeKerk, Peter and DeRidder, Richard, eds. Perspectives  
 on the Christian Reformed Church (P. DeJong) .....6:10  
 Hekman, Randall J. Justice for the unborn (F. Pronk) .....4:6  
 Heldenbrand, Richard L. Current issues in foreign missions  
 (P. DeJong) .....9:13  
 Hnnt, Dave and McMahon, T. A. The seduction of  
 Christianity: spiritual discernment in the last days  
 (J. H. Sietsema) .....11:24  
 Marshall, Phil. Bridges to Islam: a Christian perspective on  
 folk Islam (F. W. Evans) .....10:2  
 Reid, W. Stanford. Trumpeter of God; a biography of  
 John Knox (P. DeJong) .....1:24  
 Schlossberg, Herbert. Idols for destruction (P. DeJong) .....5:10  
 Ursinns, Zacharias. Commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism  
 (W. Shishko) .....7:32  
 Villet, Barbara. Blood river: the passionate saga of  
 South Africa's Afrikaners and of life in their  
 embattled land (P. DeJong) .....1:2