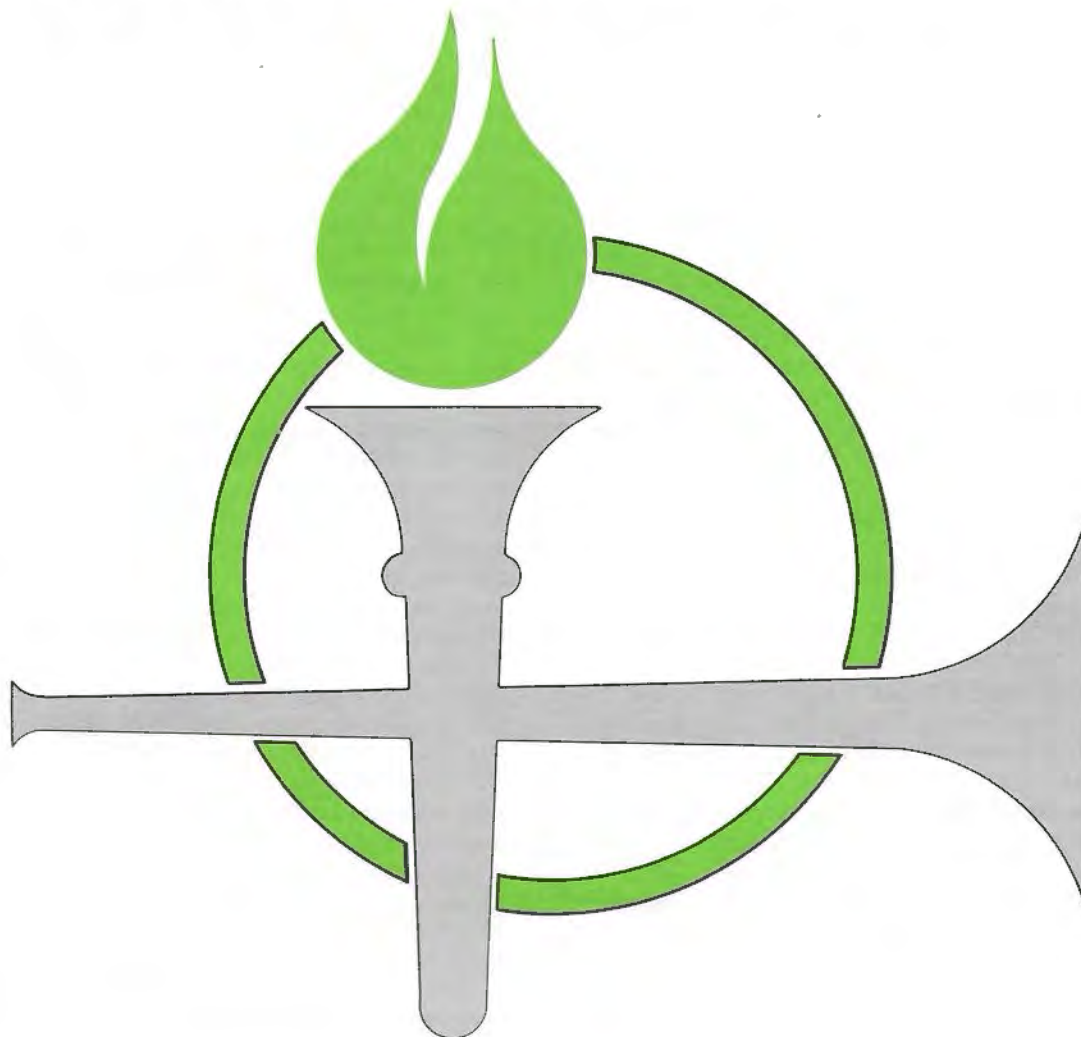


THE OUTLOOK

DEVOTED TO THE EXPOSITION AND DEFENSE OF THE REFORMED FAITH

APRIL 1986



ADAM AND EVOLUTION
A SEXIST CATECHISM
OPEN LETTER

A German Reformed Voice at Mid-America

Peter De Jong

Latest faculty appointee at the Mid-America Reformed Seminary at Orange City, Iowa, is Rev. Robert Grossman. As an experienced pastor in the Eureka Classis, Reformed Church in the U.S., he brings a fresh and somewhat different perspective to the school. People in the area had an opportunity to become acquainted with him when he spoke at a Reformed Fellowship meeting on October 22, 1985 in the Bethel C.R. Church at Sioux Center. In his lecture he sought to bring the lessons of his churches' century of struggle with Liberalism to bear on the problems of today.

His denomination could be traced back to German immigrant beginnings in about 1710. Many of its people had come originally from the Palatinate where the Heidelberg Catechism was written, and its early connections were with Classis Amsterdam of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands. It grew until about the mid-1850s when it began to lose much of its Reformed doctrinal heritage. In 1934 almost 1700 congregations joined in the first of successive mergers which eventually became the very liberal United Church of Christ. One classis (called "Eureka" because they had "found" a way to organize as a conservative German-speaking classis in a liberalizing denomination) resisted the liberal movement and eventually became independent. Especially contributing to the apostasy from the Reformed Faith were the influences of three prominent seminary professors, F. A. Rauch, John W. Nevin, and Philip Schaff. Schaff claimed that Roman Catholicism was a legitimate development in the churches' history and that Protestantism, although having some validity, had carried the churches too far away from their Roman Catholic roots. Thus there developed what was called the "Mercersburg Theology" which stressed experience rather than doctrine, and became semi-Roman Catholic in its view of the church. Although there were strong objections to this movement, the synods did not sustain them, in effect, approving the theology being taught in the seminary. The speaker

noted the way in which seminaries often turn from the orthodox views they were established to promote, as "progressive" (or Liberal) professors gravitate to positions of influence and honor. Then even the conservative opposition may move toward congregationalism in polity and toward a simplification of doctrine (or "fundamentalism"). The German Reformed pastors soon stopped referring to the Canons of Dordt. In the retreat from Biblical doctrine this Fundamentalism essentially falls into the same error as Liberalism. In the meanwhile, the church becomes identified with a bureaucracy which claims more and more power, and loses its identity as a congregation with its officers serving God and His Kingdom. One of the worst features of this kind of development is its compromise of theological differences and leveling of diverse interpretations of the Bible so that people say that one view is as good as another. In allowing such opposite uses of the Bible one ends without the Bible. It is far better to have a disagreement like that between Luther and Zwingli than to shake hands and say that such matters are not important, that "it doesn't matter what you believe, as long as you are sincere." Liberalism is really such a false brotherhood, like that of the World Council of Churches in which truth is replaced by sincerity.

The developments which the speaker outlined as they appeared in his denominational history could also be traced in other circles, in Puritan New England and in our own denomination, for example. The movement of "progressives" to places of authority, the rise of congregationalism, regression into "Fundamentalism," church identification with bureaucracy, and, finally and worst, the leveling of differences in "interpretations" of the Scriptures are constantly in operation in churches, and call for the use of measures to forestall them. The speaker delineated several of these. We must learn to discipline ministers of the Word before they become out-and-out heretics — when their errors begin. We must restore Biblical discipline in congregation,

classis and synod, instead of calling for peace at any price. We must be willing to "contend for the faith" against errors coming from within as well as from without, and not fear controversy. When someone suggests that we take matters more easily, not be so critical, and adopt a more brotherly stance toward those who disagree, we must be more sensitive to what God thinks of us if we do not contend for the faith than to such criticisms.

In subsequent questioning and discussion the speaker noted how in a Liberal church atmosphere, although older people may keep their faith, their children and grandchildren fall away from it. Asked for an opinion about the philosophy of Dooyeweerd, he recalled how that movement began seeking a Biblical perspective, but how in its development it became very destructive when it no longer permitted the Bible to tell us what to do. Regarding the way in which Liberals gain influence in churches, he observed that many people whose theology is shaky eventually become professors. The history of the Eureka Classis' long struggle against Liberalism underscores the need for strenuous and aggressive action for the Reformed Faith and against the false teaching that betrays it.

The appointment of the new professor recalls an earlier development in our denominational history. Dr. Henry Zwaanstra in an article on "Grundy College: 1916-1934" (in *Perspectives on the CRC*, edited by De Klerk and De Ridder, pp. 109-150) details the almost 20 years of effort to provide training for ministers from the German Reformed traditions and resources of some of our churches in central Iowa. After that effort failed, victim of the depression and of the opposition to a competitor of the denominational schools, the former teachers became an important part of Calvin's faculty. The gospel of Christ does not wear a national and ethnic label, although we and other Christians at times blunder into acting as though it did. (Sometimes it appears that the myth of "ethnic theologies" is becoming our churches' most advertised current heresy!) But addition of Professor Grossman with his outspoken commitment to the Biblically Reformed Faith to the Orange City staff may help to counteract some of our provincialisms and prepare students and others who are influenced by the school to become more effective servants of the gospel in our time in our own and other churches. ●

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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 Sesseling, Asst. Secretary-Treasurer; John Engbers, Randal Lankheet, John Piersma, Berton Sevensma, Harlan Vanden Einde, John Vander Aa, John Velthouse, Syburn Voortman, John Ybema, Peter Yonker

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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.

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THE OUTLOOK

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Abounding in the Work of the Lord

John Blankespoor

"Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain" I Cor. 15:58.

"Meaningless, meaningless," says the Teacher. "Utterly meaningless, everything is meaningless."

"What has been will be again. What has been done will be done again; there is nothing new under the sun.

What does a man get for all the toil and anxious striving with which he labors under the sun? All his work is pain and grief; even at night his mind does not rest. This, too, is meaningless."

So the writer (Solomon) speaks in Ecclesiastes.

In that meaningless circle, life is really a senseless episode, a repetitious monotony. And added to this vain circle are war, affliction, illness, fear, hunger, sorrow and many other adversities. And the end of it all is death.

All this is the result of sin.

• • •

Into this meaningless circle of life came Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Living One. He could say that He was "the resurrection and the life." As prophet He told us something new, mysterious and different. He spoke of a new life, a life that has purpose and a goal. On the cross He paid for the sins of His people, to obtain the right to establish that new kingdom of life. And with His resurrection it all began.

He conquered death for all His people, so that the believer really never dies (John 11:25, 26). When the Lord returns there will be the marvelous resurrection of all our dead bodies.

But much more is involved in His resurrection. The Lord begins a "new program," a "new world order," establishing His new spiritual kingdom. The Christian, in his new birth, becomes a "new creation," says Paul. In that regeneration, the "first resurrection" takes place. This is followed by a life in which Christ is doing His work in us and through us. That will culminate in the new heaven and earth on the great, final day when the Lord returns.

The natural man, according to the Word, also here in Ecclesiastes, is pictured as one running in a circle and getting nowhere, in frustration and despair. His effort ends in death. But the child of God, because of Christ, is delivered from that vicious circle and set running on a straight line, a straight course that will end in heaven. Now every day is new and has real meaning.

In this program the risen Lord is gathering and building His church, and establishing His kingdom. Sinners have to be saved, then, as His people, fear Him in love, and learn many important lessons in the great school of life.

To accomplish this the Lord uses His people, works through them, through their faith and spiritual activities. He uses pastors, theologians, elders and deacons and evangelists. But He also uses the office of all believers, with mothers in the home, fathers working every day to raise a Christian family, factory workers, business men, politicians and farmers, who when they work and live in faith are all used by the Lord in this new work.

Every Christian has a calling here, old and young, parents and grandparents, healthy and sick. Everyone has to be a kingdom worker in some way, and not the least, the poor widow with her devotion and love and simple, meaningful prayers.

All of nature is also given to the risen Lord Jesus to be used for His new kingdom. He controls the weather, health and sickness, rain and drought, war and peace, even tensions and problems of the great rulers of the nations. All things are made to work together for good for those who love Him. And even though the devil does his utmost to thwart the cause of the risen Lord, his work and attempts are doomed to fail. Jesus alone is Lord.

• • •

It is about this new work of the Lord that Paul speaks in the last verse of I Corinthians 15. These Corinthians were new converts. They had some serious problems. They believed that Jesus arose from the dead, but they did not understand how believers would be raised. When their fellow Christians came to the end of their lives they died and were buried. Paul therefore emphasizes in this chapter the blessed

relation of the believers with Christ. He is the head, and if the head was raised, members of the body must also arise. He also uses the example of the seed. It has to be sown in the ground if the new life is to come forth. So we have to be buried and later will be raised.

Finally in the chapter he comes to a grand climax, with the words:

"Where O death is your victory?

Where O death is your sting?

Death has been swallowed up in victory."

What we swallow is gone. Thus death is gone. Christ is victorious. Not only in that His people will be raised from the dead, but also in the great truth that in the work of this risen Christ everything "spells" victory.

In war one side is usually the victor and the other the loser. But even the victor has many losses. Not so is the work of the risen Christ. It's not that Christ is victorious over the devil and death, but that the devil still inflicts serious losses in the lives of Christ's people. For Christ, all is victory. Christ is able to make all things work together for good for them that love Him, in His new kingdom and world order. In that new work the devil will have nothing; he will be a complete loser. And Christ will be victorious in everything.

In that context, Paul comes to this climax in the last verse of this classic chapter, by exhorting us to "abound in the work of the Lord," the risen Christ.

• • •

In this program we must "be steadfast and immovable." In the N.I.V. we read that we must stand firm and let nothing move us. No doubt, this refers to our faith and place in this new work of Christ. It doesn't always seem as if there is something new in this old world. It doesn't always seem that Christ is Lord and in control of the entire world. In fact, what we see is the very opposite. This is a matter of faith. Often evil seems to triumph, and the work of the Christian church seems futile. Sometimes we feel like saying what old father Jacob said when his youngest son also had to go to Egypt, "All these things are against me."

"Be on your guard," Paul means to say. "Be firm, and let nothing move you in your position and work of faith." Why not? "Because our Lord is always in control, He is always successful. Your work in the Lord is never in vain."

• • •

"Therefore," we must give ourselves fully to this work of the Lord. The older versions say that we must "abound in the work of the Lord."

What a call this is, what a challenge! Wouldn't the business man, if he knew that he would always be successful, work as hard as he could?

There is much that has to be done in the church, in missions, and in the individual lives of God's people. Often it seems to be mere repetition, day after day, and year after year, and it may seem to be meaningless. But this is never true. In the kingdom, every day of work, every deed done in Christian love and

faith, is used in some way for the advancement of the cause of our victorious Lord.

Nothing is futile "in the Lord."

Give yourselves therefore fully to His work. Remember, Christ uses everything, every deed of every Christian, whether he be a pastor or layman, a leader or common member in the church, for the good of His cause. Often He works mysteriously, and for us, this is purely a matter of faith. But He is working, and always successfully.

Giving ourselves fully also means that here there is no retirement. Let no one in the kingdom ever say, "I've done my share." Aren't we going to be judged according to our works? He wants us to do a lot of work, as long as we live. Also volunteer work.

Give yourselves fully, in pleasant but also somber days, when you can work with others, or when you must plod on alone, when you can see fruits upon your labor, but also when it appears to be done for nothing.

What a word for thousands who work as little as possible, who give little, read little in their Bibles and pray little!

In this meaningless world, where the risen Lord is doing His new work, go forth in faith and do not become weary in well-doing. And experience the joy of serving your living Lord and Savior. •

Who Am I?

Glenn P. Palmer

Of whom do you think when you hear the expression "filled with the Holy Spirit?" Perhaps a prophet of God such as Elijah or John the Baptist calling down judgment? Or Peter at Pentecost?

I too have been filled with the Holy Spirit; yet my words are never recorded in the Bible. Because of the wisdom and insight from the Holy Spirit, I expressed myself with my hands in all kinds of mediums such as gold, silver, bronze, stone and wood, in all kinds of craftsmanship. Who am I and who is my capable assistant?

• • •

I am a godless man. Do not name any of your children after me. I persecuted the church and put to death James, the brother of John. Then I seized Peter to put him to death also, but he escaped. After this I went to Caesarea from Judea to settle a dispute between the people of Tyre and Sidon and myself. I sat on my throne in my royal robes and made an impressive speech, if I may say so. The people shouted, "This is the voice of a god and not a man." Immediately I was struck down by an angel of the Lord and was eaten by worms and died, as the Bible says, because I did not give praise to God. Pride goes before a fall. Who am I? •

Ex. 31:1-6; 35:30ff.; 38:22ff.; Acts 12.

Women Deacons

CHURCH POLITY AND HERMENEUTICS⁽³⁾

Frederika Pronk

IV. The Nature of Office In the Reformed Tradition

That Reformed churches have stressed the unity and equality of offices is reflected in its Church Orders. Article 1 of the CRC Church Order reads that "the offices of the minister of the Word, elder, deacon, and evangelist . . . differ from each other only in mandate and task, not in dignity and honor."⁷⁵ Moreover, "no office-bearer shall lord it over another office bearer."⁷⁶ The churches of the Reformation wanted no part of the hierarchical clergy system of the Roman Catholic church and the history of the diaconate in the Reformed churches reflects this struggle to maintain unity and equality of office. Even though a diversity of functions was recognized, the fact that deacons were considered part of the general consistory reflects the struggle for unity.

A high view of the diaconate together with a concern for the unity of offices led to a theology which saw Christ's offices of prophet, priest and king reflected in the offices whereby Christ ruled His church. Prof. Heyns wrote: "The Reformed churches have distinguished themselves favorably in this respect, since they were the only ones that have restored this office [diaconate] in its original biblical sense. But even in these Churches the diaconate office has not been valued as it should be, nor have they brought it to its rightful development."⁷⁷ The thinking was that the three offices of minister, elder and deacon "root in the triple office of Christ Himself, Who is our prophet, priest and king."⁷⁸ This view was championed by Van Dellen and Monsma who became responsible for embedding it as an accepted principle of Reformed church polity.⁷⁹

This principle was further refined by the Dutch theologian, Dr. K. Dijk, who pleaded for unity of offices because office bearers are servants of Christ, caring for His sheep in His name. Dr. Dijk argues for a Church Order which should conform to the Belgic Confession which shows the unity of the offices. He believes that the Confession (Articles 30-32) is normative for Reformed church polity in that it puts the unity of office in the council of the church as a governing body.⁸⁰ He claims that it is impossible to separate the work of deacons from the pastoral and ruling functions of elders and ministers of the Word, because this unity of function has its roots in the apostolic office. The diaconate as a separate office arose as an extension

of Christ's work performed through the apostolic office. "Deacons are servants of Christ who in His Name and upon His command exercise care . . . through the service of the church."⁸¹ "A duality has arisen," which in his opinion, "has not been solved in any diaconal manual,"⁸² and which has constantly caused problems in the ecclesiastical life of Reformed churches.

Applying Dijk's theory, he would no doubt view the synodical decision of 1984 to ordain women deacons, provided their work "be distinguished from that of elders" as such an example of duality of office. Also the repeated rejection of CRC synods to have deacons delegated to major assemblies⁸³ would fall into this category. It is significant that in the discussion to have deacons delegated to major assemblies, the following grounds have been proposed: "(1) biblical recognition of the authority of all ecclesiastical office, (2) the importance of the priestly aspect of the church's ministry, (3) the large number of matters at major assemblies that concern deacons, and (4) the recognized principle of the equality and unity of office."⁸⁴ As has been pointed out by a study report on the offices, the work of office bearers overlap, so that ministers and elders have part in promoting the work of mercy, and deacons engage in pastoral, teaching and governing functions.⁸⁵

More recent studies on the offices have focused on the service character of the offices, so that one study committee concluded: "The special ministries are primarily characterized by service, rather than by status, dominance or privilege."⁸⁶ Good order dictates the function of special ministries. For there is "no essential distinction but only a functional one between ministers, elders, deacons, and all other members of the church . . . All are commissioned to serve."⁸⁷ The advisory committee tried to maintain a balance between authority and service, and among other recommendations proposed the statement which was adopted: "Nowhere in the New Testament is there a conflict between authority and service, or between ruling and love. Christian authority involves service in the name of the authoritative Christ."⁸⁸

A 1972 study committee was of the opinion that the Reformers "regarded special office as being 'functional' or 'instrumental' in character,"⁸⁹ that Calvin's "functionalism allowed him to be somewhat pragmatic and flexible, sensitive to the immediate situation, to the exigencies of the times."⁹⁰ The report

states that the offices of prophet, priest and king of the Old Testament have found their fulfilment in Christ and does "not offer us a normative pattern for ecclesiastical office and ordination in the church today."⁹¹ Moreover, the New Testament gives examples of a variety of functionaries in the church: disciples, the seventy, apostles, the seven, prophets, evangelists, teachers, elders and bishops, and deacons (cf. Rom. 12:6-8; I Cor. 12: 4-19; I Cor. 12:28-30; Eph. 4:11). It is stated that New Testament materials "contain guiding principles significant for the church of every age. But they do not present a definitive church-organizational structure to which the church must remain bound for all time."⁹²

As Goodykoontz points out, however, the New Testament passages which deal with the various ministries performed by Christians, "refer either to offices (titles) or functions (tasks), or more likely to the two in a unity that cannot be divided."⁹³ Furthermore, Scripture gives definite qualifications for special offices which are similar and overlap.⁹⁴ It is true, Calvin did allow for the "exigencies of the times" and was flexible, as is evident from the fact that he included Doctors of Theology as a fourth office and recognized two kinds of deacons — one as office bearer and one as assistant. But he was concerned with the norms and principles of Scripture and he did recognize specific offices. Says Calvin: "But even though the term 'diakonia' itself has a wider application, Scripture specifically designates as deacon those whom the church has appointed to distribute alms and take care of the poor, and serve as stewards of the common chest of the poor. Their origin, institution, and office are described by Luke in The Acts [Acts 6:3]."⁹⁵ When one consults Reformed commentators on church polity one will invariably find that they point to Acts 6 for the origin of the diaconal office.⁹⁶

It is true, Scripture doesn't give us all the details and leaves room for development and application or norms and principles to specific situations and circumstances. There is a certain fluidity and diversity in that one can speak of focus of office, so that "even though a deacon brings the Word, engages in and promotes the work of evangelist, nevertheless he is ordained to the office of deacon because the ministry of mercy is primary in his work."⁹⁷ The principle is clear. There is a basic unity of office in diversity, which "embraces the total ministry of the church, a ministry that is rooted in Christ."⁹⁸

V. Hermeneutics Used In Synodical Reports

The 1973 report on "Women in Ecclesiastical Office" examines "in the light of Scripture the general Reformed practice of excluding women from ecclesiastical office, . . . a practice generally accepted as biblical."⁹⁹ The report speaks of the difficulty of their task in overcoming "ages of accepted interpretations and exegesis."¹⁰⁰ They ask "to what extent has the Reformed practice of excluding women from office been determined by social conditions and traditions by the status that society has assigned to women?"¹⁰¹ Key passages which have always been regarded as

normative in determining the place of women in the Old and New Testament, such as Genesis 1-3, Galatians 3:28, I Corinthians 7, 11:22-16, 14:33b-36 and I Timothy 2:8-15 are examined. It is concluded that these passages must be explained in terms of Paul's socio-cultural view of his times. It is stated that Paul was not a social-revolutionary and therefore he stressed that the equality of men and women in Christ as a position of "new freedom contrary to the existing social conditions could in effect be a hindrance to missionary work; charges of objectionable conduct could be levied at the new church."¹⁰² Therefore, "we maintain that many of Paul's specific regulations are not intended to be timeless applications of certain lasting and foundational principles."¹⁰³

The conclusion is that "the practice of excluding women from ecclesiastical office cannot conclusively be defended on biblical grounds."¹⁰⁴ Admittedly, this Report was recognized as a one-sided approach and incomplete, and another study committee was appointed to examine the method of interpreting biblical data, equality, creation order, headship and roles and functions of women in the church.

The 1975 study report, "Women in Ecclesiastical Office," by way of a questionnaire, found that more church councils favored the traditional way of interpreting the relevant Scripture passages, but there is some support for instituting the office of deaconess, and considerable support for "using women in the work of the church outside the existing offices."¹⁰⁵ Their examination of the headship principle in Scripture caused them to conclude that "Biblical teaching is not opposed in principle to the ordination of women to any office that men hold in the church."¹⁰⁶ The reason is that "headship is expressed at the time of creation but dominion or rule is not expressed until the curse is pronounced as a result of sin (Genesis 3:16). In the New Testament headship is once again emphasized but from the perspective of the wife being submissive to her husband as set forth in the example of Christ's love and headship of the church."¹⁰⁷ The 1984 majority study report on "Headship in the Bible" came to a similar conclusion (Acts of Synod 1984, pp. 282-336).

The 1978 report, "Hermeneutical Principles Governing Women in Ecclesiastical Office," consisting of Old and New Testament scholars, tries to come to grips with the problem of hermeneutics involved in the women in office issue. It says much which has generally been accepted in Reformed circles, such as "the Bible's message need not be mediated to the ordinary believer by means of some officially authorized body of interpreters. The Bible's message, according to the Reformers, can be grasped by all who prayerfully seek to understand it."¹⁰⁸ It is noted that the interpreter's task is not finished until he has discovered the meaning of the passage for today. "The Bible is God's complete and final revelation to man and in its light all disputes ought to be settled."¹⁰⁹ The Report goes on to say that "nevertheless, the question may be considered whether a given word the canon speaks on the subject, is possibly open to the future for further development in connection with the coming of God's kingdom."¹¹⁰ Joel's prophecy (2:28,

29; cf. Acts 2:17-21) is seen as an example that "there may be fulfillments of these words reaching beyond the New Testament period itself into the history of the Christian church."¹¹¹ Not only must the historical and cultural situation of the Bible be considered, but also the "present historical cultural situation must be understood to make sound contemporary applications."¹¹²

The same relevant Bible passages of the previous report are examined and it is concluded that because Paul's statement concerning the woman's role in the church are made within the context of specific historical situations, it "raises the question whether Paul's teaching on this matter is complete." The conclusions are more carefully formulated than that of the 1973 report and it is stated that the principle of headship "involves an element of authority, . . . men and women have equality of worth since both are image-bearers of God."¹¹³ Nevertheless, some new hermeneutical questions were raised in regard to the relevant Scripture passage regarding women in office.

The 1981 report, "Synodical Studies on Women in Office and Decisions Pertaining to the Office of Deacon," reviewed the 1978 report and added some new viewpoints on the Scriptural grounds for the office of deacon. It downplays the importance of Acts 6 in establishing the office of deacon. It lists all the discrepancies that exist between deacons as we know them today and declares that "the link between Acts 6 and the office of deacon as we know it is, to say the least, based on very superficial 'ground'."¹¹⁴ The same is said about I Timothy 3. "Our conclusion is that [it] does not bring us very close at all to a definition of the office and tasks of the deacon."¹¹⁵

It is evident that there are new elements of hermeneutics involved in the conclusions reached by the various study reports. The most specific Scripture passage pertaining to women's position, I Timothy 2:11, where Paul states, "I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man" (NIV translation) is questioned. No unanimity could be reached by the 1978 study committee as to whether "Paul's injunction is binding for all times and places."¹¹⁶ So synod 1984 concluded that "no study committee (1973, 1975, 1978, 1981, 1984) found biblical reasons to keep the office of deacon closed to qualified women."¹¹⁷ This means that "no biblical message speaks directly to the question of women in ecclesiastical office as presently understood. . . [and] there is a question whether Paul's teaching on this matter is complete."¹¹⁸

After reading the reams of study reports dealing with women in office, the ordinary Bible student who supposedly is able to interpret Scripture for him or herself, is left bewildered. What then do the relevant Bible passages pertaining to women's position mean for today?

VI. Changing the Church Order

In its mandate to define how to implement "the decision of Synod 1984" the study committee faces a difficult task. This task involves defining "the work of elders and deacons in such fashion that the local churches will be assisted in carrying out the decision

of Synod 1984, that 'the work of women as deacons . . . be distinguished from that of elders' (Church Order Supplement, Art. 3)."¹¹⁹ Reference is made to Report 32, Acts of Synod 1984, which gave some suggestions. The options consisted of the following:

- (1) Women as deacons and as members of the consistory.
- (2) Women as deacons but not as members of the consistory.
- (3) Women in an ordained office of their own but not as members of the consistory.
- (4) Woman not in ordained office but commissioned to assist in the work of all the offices.¹²⁰

In the light of the fifteen-year-old history of women deacons, questions as to the nature of office and Biblical hermeneutics will arise again. Church Order changes will have to be made, depending on which of the above positions are adopted. Although it may be so that "a vital part of the Reformed heritage is found in the principle that the polity of the church must always respond to the times in which the church serves its generation,"¹²¹ too many and too rapid changes usually tend to confusion and conflict. It is significant that whereas "between the years 1912 and 1965 only two significant changes were made in the Church Order, from 1965 to 1978 twenty-three articles have been revised!"¹²²

The history of Reformed churches shows that church polity has often led to deep conflicts and even schism, witness the Secession movement in which the CRC had its roots. Although the conflict regarding church polity focused on the role of the government in church affairs, church polity nevertheless played a big part in the Secession movement. Doctrine and church polity were intimately related. "To the leaders of the Secession (Afscheiding) these two matters were inextricably intertwined and could not be separated. When efforts to restore the church to loyalty to its heritage were rebuffed at every turn, secession and re-formation of the church appeared to be the only viable alternative."¹²³ Complaints with respect to departure from the Church Order of Dort were among the grounds cited by those who seceded in 1857 from the Reformed Church in America to form the CRC.¹²⁴ Other schisms which centered in the application of church polity occurred in 1924 in the CRC and in 1944 in the Netherlands.

Another factor will be the Belgic Confession which specifies a particular kind of church government. Although the synod of 1985 adopted "persons" rather than "men" as the best translation to describe office bearer,¹²⁵ it still has to deal with the fact that it states "such persons" are "chosen according to the rule that Paul gave to Timothy."¹²⁶ The fact is that at the time the Church Order was adopted (1618-19) this was interpreted to mean that men were to occupy the office of deacons as part of the church council. By changing the Church Order to permit women to function as deacons, the historic understanding of the Confession of the Church is affected. Since Reformed churches are confessional churches, which require the signing of the Form of Subscription for all office bearers, this may cause further problems and pain.¹²⁷

VII. Conclusion

It is clear that the way the women deacon issue will be implemented will determine the direction of hermeneutics in the CRC. It can be decided by making some adaptations and modifications in the functions of the diaconate which will be in harmony with traditionally accepted norms and principles of Scripture, so that women deacons will assist male deacons or function as deaconesses as they previously did in the history of the Reformed churches. This would erode the unity and equality of office as understood by many in the Reformed tradition. Or, if it is judged that the historic unity of offices needs to be preserved, women deacons may be given full status in the general consistory. If this latter way is chosen there is no reason why women could not also occupy the other offices. By allowing women deacons to function on the same basis as male deacons now do in the general consistory, women will be given ruling and governing functions, which would void the headship principle which now excludes them from the offices of minister and elder.

Evidently both sides cannot be satisfied. If the first way is chosen, those who seek "full opportunity and equality for women" will not be satisfied, even if women deacons are given equal status with male deacons in the general consistory, for presently deacons do not fully participate at all levels of the major assemblies of the church. If the last way is chosen, it will mean increased pain because of the departure from the historic Reformed interpretation of office in Scripture.

The decision which Synod will make in regard to the implementation of women deacons will decide the future of Reformed hermeneutics in the CRC. The real issue which is at stake is whether the Spirit is opening new ways of understanding the Scriptures, or whether these changes arise primarily from the spirit of the age. One thing is clear, the women in office issue shows that church polity and hermeneutics are inextricably intertwined. ●

75. William P. Brink and Richard R. De Ridder. *Manual of Christian Reformed Church Government* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Board of Publications of the Christian Reformed Church, 1980), p. 7.
76. *Ibid.*, Article 95, p. 26.
77. Prof. Wm. Heyns, *Handbook for Elders and Deacons* (234 Pearl Street, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1928), p. 77.
78. De Jong. *The Ministry of Mercy Today*, p. 161.
79. Monsma, *The New Revised Church Order Commentary*, pp. 23-25.
80. Prof. Dr. K. Dijk. *De Eenheid Der Ambten* (Balijelaan 79b, Utrecht: Uitgave Centraal Bureau van de Diaconieën der Geref. Kerken, 1949), p. 25.
81. *Ibid.*, p. 21; transl. F.P.
82. Dijk. *De Eenheid Der Ambten*, p. 24.
83. Acts of Synod 1980, pp. 584-90 gives an overview.
84. Acts of Synod 1966, p. 22.
85. Acts of Synod 1978, pp. 549-50.
86. Acts of Synod 1973, p. 713.
87. *Ibid.*, p. 715.
88. *Ibid.*, p. 62.
89. Acts of Synod 1972, p. 465.
90. *Ibid.*, p. 467.
91. *Ibid.*, p. 436.
92. *Ibid.*, p. 456.

93. Harry G. Goodykoontz. *The Minister in the Reformed Tradition* (Richmond, Virginia, 1963), p. 29.
94. A comparison of I Tim. 3:8-12 which lists qualifications for deacons, with I Tim. 3:2-7 and Titus 1:6-9 which list qualifications for elders, shows that there are at least five qualifications which are similar.
95. Calvin's Institutes, Vol. 2, IV, iii, 9, p. 1061.
96. This is also recognized by Goodykoontz who says in *The Minister in the Reformed Tradition* that "Acts 6:1-6 is held by most Reformed scholars to be an account of the origin of the diaconate" (p. 39).
97. Acts of Synod 1976, p. 525.
98. *Ibid.*, p. 540.
99. Acts of Synod 1973, p. 514.
100. *Ibid.*, p. 515.
101. *Ibid.*, p. 517.
102. *Ibid.*, p. 542.
103. *Ibid.*, p. 554.
104. *Ibid.*, p. 587.
105. Acts of Synod 1975, p. 572.
106. *Ibid.*, p. 593.
107. *Ibid.*, p. 590.
108. Acts of Synod 1978
109. *Ibid.*, p. 488.
110. *Ibid.*
111. *Ibid.*, p. 508.
112. *Ibid.*, p. 502.
113. *Ibid.*, p. 530.
114. Acts of Synod 1981, p. 499.
115. *Ibid.*, p. 498.
116. Acts of Synod 1981, p. 527.
117. Acts of Synod 1984, p. 627.
118. Acts of Synod 1978, p. 529.
119. Acts of Synod 1985, p. 781.
120. Acts of Synod 1984, p. 331.
121. Brink and De Ridder, *Manual of Christian Reformed Church Government*, p. 2.
122. *Ibid.*, p. 3.
123. Richard R. De Ridder. *A Survey of the Sources of Reformed Church Polity and the Form of Government of the Christian Reformed Church in America*. (Calvin Theological Seminary, 1983), pp. 89, 90.
124. Brink and De Ridder, *Manual of Christian Reformed Church Government*, p. 2.
125. Acts of Synod 1985, p. 78.
126. *Ibid.*
127. C. O. Art. 5; cf. Supplement, *Manual of Christian Reformed Church Government*, pp. 45-47.

Mrs. Pronk, the wife of the pastor of Grand Rapids' Free Reformed Church is a student at Calvin Theological Seminary.

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No "Denominational Differences"?

"Coffee Break" is one of the evangelistic programs of the CRC being used in several congregations. It is a Bible study program designed for ladies of the church, but geared toward outreach. Ladies of the church are encouraged to invite non-church friends and neighbors to come along to this Bible study (at which baby-sitting is provided) and thus introduce them to the Scriptures and (hopefully) to the church, in a "non-confrontational" setting.

The intent of the program is good: to reach out to ladies of the community with the gospel of Christ. Such efforts are laudable.

Having seen and listened to the brief slide program intended to acquaint churches with this program, however, (produced by the Home Mission Board) I have some questions. As already said, the program wants to be "non-confrontational" in character. So far so good. But the program goes on to say that "denominational differences are not discussed." That strikes my Reformed feelers in a wrong way. What is meant by that? Does that mean that Reformed distinctives like infant baptism (the teaching of the covenant), the nature of the kingdom of God, the teaching about total depravity and about God's electing love, etc. are not discussed? Are these merely "denominational differences" which can conveniently be forgotten or overlooked? Or are they fundamental teachings of the Bible which cannot possibly be avoided? How e.g. could one study Ephesians 1 & 2 and not possibly deal with election and man's total depravity? How could one study Rom. 4 or Gal. 3 and not get into the whole matter of the covenant and infant baptism?

Granted, when introducing newcomers to the Bible, one does not need to go into the fine points of theology and all the differences between the various Reformed churches. But a statement such as that referred to above surely makes one wonder, and leaves something to be desired. It almost sounds as if doctrinal differences are merely a matter of "pet (denominational) peeves." If that is the case, we had better repent quickly and get together with Roman Catholics and others. But that is hardly the case! Are we going to hide our distinctives during the Coffee Break discussion, but then later, if some of these ladies express an interest in the church, face them "with all the goods?" Or are we only interested in leading them to Christ and not to His church? (if that were possible). Imagine a Jehovah's Witness coming to one of these Bible studies and not being willing to discuss the triune nature of God, because we don't want to discuss "denominational differences!" Is there, after all, such a thing as a "non-denominational" church? What kind of a church would that be — a kind of an "invisible" church which floats above all the variations of the church on earth?

I have some real questions here. I don't believe for a moment that we have to apologize for our distinctive Reformed teachings. After all, we confess that "they do fully agree with the Word of God" (Form of Subscription). Or are we not so sure of that anymore, particularly when it comes to our evangelism programs? ●

J. Tuininga, Lethbridge, Alta.

An Open Letter to the Editor of *The Banner*

Dear Brother A K,

No doubt most of the readers of *The Banner* have long since forgotten your Editorial in the October 21, 1985 issue, on the work of the committee to translate the Canons of Dort. So you may be asking me why I don't just let that sleeping dog lie. The reason I am calling attention to it in this public fashion is that we as committee have learned that at least some people have taken you seriously when you accuse us of, "Instead of changing the confession to fit the Scriptures, the committee used an old and discredited Bible version to shore up the confession." Although you cite only one instance where this may have been done, you give the impression that it is rather generally the case. This is a serious charge, not only against the committee, but also against the father of Dort who formulated the Canons. You generalize the accusation to an indefinite "we," by whom you presumably mean all the members of the Christian Reformed Church when you conclude by saying: "We lack the courage to ask whether the content of the confession is in harmony with the Scriptures. But we have the audacity to make the Bible text fit the confession."

We'd rather do that than be called Arminian."

The evidence for these charges you find first of all in the statement of the committee that translation of Scripture texts quoted in the Canons constituted a special problem because the fathers of Dort do not always quote the Bible as found in modern versions. So the committee, rather than substitute a current version, e.g. the RSV or NIV, chose to translate the Latin as literally as possible. In this connection it must be remembered that in 1618 there was as yet no Dutch "Authorized Version," the Staten Vertaling dates from 1637. The King James Version had just been completed in 1611. No doubt the learned members of the Synod often made their own translations from the Hebrew and the Greek. That there are a few instances where these can be called into question in the light of later textual and exegetical progress is not surprising, but in reality the instances where this is the case are much fewer than the statement of the committee might lead one to expect.

The example you zero in on is the quotation of Acts 15:18 in Article 6 of Chapter I. The Canons quote this

text pretty much in language also found in the Authorized or King James Version, based on the so-called Textus Receptus. The KJV reads: "Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world." Our translation of the Latin reads: "For all his works are known to God from eternity." The RSV, following a text more acceptable to modern scholarship, reads: "Says the Lord, who has made these things known from of old." The NIV translates verse 18, "that have been known for ages," "That" referring to "these things" that the Lord is said to do in verse 17. It is significant that the NIV considered the textual evidence for the older rendering strong enough to indicate in the footnote that some MSS read "things—known to the Lord for ages is his work."

Before going into this example of the use of a "discredited text" to prove a doctrinal point I do want to call attention to the fact that this is the only instance where such a problem really looms large. In the positive part of the Canons, the Articles in distinction from the Rejection of Errors, there are only 18 instances of quoting texts or referring to them by location. Although naturally those who might disagree with the conclusions of the Synod will quarrel with the use of some of these citations, Acts 15:18 is the only one where the matter of manuscript authority enters into the picture. So giving the impression that the Canons and therefore also the committee are doing this repeatedly is grossly unfair.

You say two things about Acts 15:18. First, you call this an "old and discredited Bible version" leaving the impression that nothing can be said in favor of the KJV text. While it is true that most scholars are in favor of the RSV and NIV reading there have been and still are men who argue for the older text. The textual data involved have been known for a long time. I quote from the Pulpit Commentary: "As regards the reading of the R.V. in ver. 18, it is a manifest corruption. It is not the reading of either the Hebrew or the Greek version of Amos, or of any other version; and it makes no sense. Whereas the T.R., which is the reading of Irenaeus (III, XII), as Meyer truly says, 'presents a thought completely clear, pious, noble, and inoffensive as regards the connection,' though he thinks that a reason for rejecting it. Nothing could be more germane to St. James' argument than thus to show from the words of Amos that God's present purpose of taking the Gentiles to be his people was, like all his other works, formed from the beginning of the world (comp. Eph. 1:9-10, 3:5-6, 2 Tim. 1:9, etc.)."

Your second objection goes beyond the matter of textual authority into the meaning of Acts 15:18 and you state: "But today nobody believes that Acts 15:18 says anything at all about an eternal decision of God that would determine which people would get saving faith. Nevertheless, we keep this wrong text in the Canons because the fathers had it there."

The Report of the committee to study Dr. Harry Boer's gravamen about reprobation correctly declares that Acts 15:18 does not prove the doctrine of reprobation which is taught in Article 6 as well as is the doctrine of election. But when taken in the context a good argument can be made for the fact that Acts 15:18,

even in the revised version, says something about election. In his commentary on Acts Dr. F. F. Bruce says: "The conjunction 'and' before 'all the Gentiles' (v. 17) is exegetical; a better translation would be 'even' or 'that is to say.' The 'residue of men' who are to 'seek after the Lord' are identical with 'all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called' — i.e., the elect from every nation. According to v. 18 as translated in the ARV, the inclusion of the Gentiles in the ranks of God's people was revealed in OT days (cf. Paul's argument in Romans 15:8ff.)."

The Canadian Reformed Churches have recently approved a new translation of the Canons of Dort. In it they have come to a very interesting solution of the problem of Acts 15:18. Dropping all reference to the location of Acts 15:18 they translate the first two sentences of Article 6 as follows: "That God in time confers the gift of faith on some, and not on others, proceeds from His eternal decree. For all His works He knows from eternity, and He accomplishes all things according to the counsel of His will." The margin indicates that the words in italics are from Ephesians 1:11. This, of course, is not a literal translation, but in fact a revision of the article. Significant it is that this revision accepts the words "All His works He (God) knows from eternity" as true, even though not Scripture. Although I personally do not approve of this solution to the problem of Acts 15:18 I do believe that God does know all his works from eternity. Even the Arminians believed and still believe that; only in their view this foreknowledge does not determine election, but is contingent on human choices.

As a member of the committee my objection to your editorial is especially that you take the report of a committee mandated to translate the Canons as an opportunity for a diatribe against the Canons themselves and against the Christian Reformed Church for accepting the Canons as a confession! If we should revise the Canons the way for a gravamen is open, but the committee cannot be accused of audacity for simply doing its duty of giving the Church a faithful and accurate translation of an official doctrinal standard. As members of the committee we did not feel that we would rather make the Bible fit the confession rather than be called Arminians! That kind of language judges the motives not only of the committee members, but of many members of the Church who in good conscience are honestly committed to the Reformed faith as confessed in the Confession of Faith, Article 16, and the Canons of Dort, Chapter I, Article 6.

Thanks especially to the conscientious work of two members of our committee, Dr. Don Sinnema and Dr. Al Wolters, I believe we have produced a very readable and accurate translation of the Canons of Dort. Contrary to your apparent feeling that this is a futile effort, it is my hope that this new translation will revive interest in the Canons and in the Reformed theology they defend and explain so well. I would expect *The Banner* to stimulate such interest and study. Yours in the interest of being Reformed,
Elco H. Oostendorp
Hudsonville, Michigan

the Acts

Henry VanderKam

THE PERSECUTION OF THE APOSTLES Lesson 15 Acts 12

It was bound to come! It is a miracle that the Apostles had not been persecuted before this. Already in chapter six the author of Acts tells us of the persecutions that come on the church. But, it was a persecution coming from the religious leaders of the Jews and striking the common members of the church. The secular rulers do not seem to have concerned themselves about the spread of the gospel of Christ. The picture is now about to change.

Herod Agrippa (to distinguish this one from the several other Herods mentioned in the New Testament), the grandson of Herod the Great, now moved to persecute several members of the church. We do not read of any particular reason for this persecution at this time. However, this man hungers for power, popularity and honor. He surely is well aware of the fact that the church is growing everywhere. He is also aware of the fact that the Jews are no friends of these Christians. Throw your influence in the direction in which it will bring the most honor and glory to yourself! Not the Christians, but the Jews will receive his favors. This Herod has done certain things for the Jews in the past. Even though he wants to please the emperor at Rome, he has seen to it that an image of the emperor Caligula was not placed in the holy place at Jerusalem. He is sensitive enough to the Jewish religion and tradition to know that an image of the emperor placed in the holy place is an abomination to every Jew. This was not due to his love for the Jews but to his desire to keep the people in his camp. He had some Jewish blood in him, but was really an Idumean.

A Martyred Apostle

The afflicting hand of Herod is extended to the church and some of the members feel the sting of his persecutions. Those who so suffered at his hand are not even named. But, now he reaches farther and strikes within the circle of the twelve Apostles. So far

these have escaped the persecution which others have had to endure. Even the deacon Stephen is persecuted long before the Apostles. Herod takes hold of James and kills him with the sword. This is the brother of the Apostle John, one of the three who were closer to Christ than the others. Nothing has been heard of any of the Apostles except Peter and John since Pentecost. What has this James done? No doubt he calmly went about the task which Christ had assigned to all the Apostles, to preach the word and establish the church in various places. Since Pentecost only this one sentence is devoted to the Apostle James, even though much more than a long chapter is devoted to the work and speech of Stephen. Luke certainly is not writing biographies of the twelve. Why doesn't the Lord send an angel to rescue this important Apostle? God has His own way of writing history. He allows an enemy of the truth to sit on the throne of David and strike an ambassador of the Messiah!

Peter's Arrest

When Herod sees that this act of his is popular among the people, he seizes Peter too. This is the leader of the band of the Apostles. If he can also rid his tiny kingdom of this man, he will have struck a blow for the Jews and for his own well-being. Herod still has a certain respect for the feast days of the Jews and therefore will not do anything about Peter until after the holidays. How this reminds one of the care the enemies took at the time of the seizure of Jesus. "Not on the feast," they said; but God said: "on the feast," because He was the Pascal lamb. If the execution has to be postponed for a while, Peter must be guarded well. There is a certain danger in having a notable prisoner and keeping him in custody for a time before anything can be done about him. The guard is placed — and it is strong! Four shifts of soldiers guard this man! He is tied. There are iron gates! What kind of a man is being guarded? After the Passover judgment will be pronounced against him and the punishment will be severe.

Prayer and Deliverance

There are so many aspects of this story which ought to receive more attention than we are here able to give them. Herod guards — but he cannot prevent the church from praying. The power of prayer goes right past all the guards and past iron gates. These are the kind of times which drive the believers to prayer. They do not have the physical power to resist Herod, but they can call on the heavenly power to intervene. Of course, they do not know whether he will be delivered. Nevertheless, they must pray! No doubt they did it for James too — but he was killed.

The time is coming close for Herod to make an end of the life of Peter. The night before — Notice how God waits till the last moment! God knows His time and His plans and these will be carried out. Even though the next day will be decisive for the Apostle, he is sleeping between two soldiers. He is ready to live for his Lord and he is also ready to die for Him. He is so sound asleep that the angel has to awaken him. An angel is sent by God to deliver His servant. The light radiating from this heavenly being lightens the cell where he is. The guards continue to sleep. The angel tells Peter to get up, get dressed and to follow him. Chains fall away. Guards are immobilized. Iron gates open by themselves. All is done in an orderly fashion. The Lord has complete control. If He does not allow one of His servants to suffer at the hands of men, he will not suffer! Is this reality or is it a dream? Peter is not sure for a time. But when the angel has led him out of the prison, past the guards and through the gates and leads him through one of the streets of the city, Peter knows that he is dealing with reality and that it is not a dream.

So far he has been led by the angel. But this heavenly being now departs and Peter must make his own plans. This is not difficult to do. He goes to the place where he knows there will be believers meeting even though it is in the middle of the night. The home of the mother of John Mark has an important place in the life of the early church.

He has been right. The believers are together here. He knocks and calls at the gate of this house. (This writer has also dealt with this episode in the Outlook of December 1984 in the series on Prayer). A certain slave, Rhoda, answers the knock, realizes it is Peter, but doesn't open the gate. When she tells those inside the house, who have been praying for Peter's release, that Peter is at the gate, they say that she is mad! Answers to prayer can be so great that they are virtually beyond belief. Could it be his angel? It can't be that it is really Peter. Could it even be more difficult to believe that it is an angel knocking? Finally, however, they open the gate and it is Peter! Now they are amazed and, as is common among them, they all begin to speak at once. Peter motions to them to be quiet so that he will be able to tell them what has happened. What a story! Don't keep this to yourselves, tell the brethren, the other Apostles, and especially James, the brother of Jesus. This James has assumed a leading role in the early church. If anyone, he must know that the Apostle Peter is safe and no longer in prison. Then Peter leaves and he "went to another place." Luke doesn't tell us where he went.

It will be made known to the brethren that Peter is no longer in prison but it will also become very plain to the soldiers in the morning that Peter is no longer their prisoner. They are responsible for him! Herod can't find him. This man has been so well guarded and he has still escaped. These soldiers, who are completely innocent, must now pay the supreme price for the escape of Peter. The cruelty of the Herods was proverbial. He certainly will not believe that an angel has set the man Peter free. The blame can be placed nowhere except on the soldier guard. They pay with their lives for Peter's freedom. Then, as though nothing has happened, Herod goes to Caesarea.

Herod's Triumph and Fall

Why does he go to Caesarea? He has had some difficulty with the people of Tyre and Sidon. It is not germane to the account to know exactly what this difficulty was, but Herod's kingdom supplied Tyre and Sidon with food. These people cannot afford trouble with Herod, because he will then cut off their supplies. A famine threatens. Tyre and Sidon must bring their wealth into the kingdom of Herod. Nothing must disturb the orderly processes in the empire of Rome. Ambassadors are sent from Tyre and Sidon to placate the king. They work through his principal servant, Blastus, and receive an audience with "the great man."

Herod makes the most of this occasion. Dressed in his royal robes and seated on a throne, he makes an oration to these people. They say that his oration is like the voice of God and not of a man. What tremendous talent! It is super-human! Their flattery of the king is extreme. They are dependent on him and they want to make the best impression possible by an appeal to his vanity. He doesn't stop them. He likes it.

God then intervenes. Herod is struck down by a loathsome disease. Luke says he "was eaten of worms." He did not give God the glory for anything he might have. God removes all glory from him, even the dignity of a common human life. Soon Herod is dead. He has dared to touch the church of Christ. The stone of Daniel's vision is beginning to roll. The kingdoms of Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar and Darius fell to it and the little kingdom of Herod will also have to bow to the God of the church! He rules and that fact will encourage the church through the ages.

Gospel Growth

But, the preaching of the gospel grows. This is heard like a refrain in the book of Acts (6:7, 19:20 etc.). Nothing is going to stop the spread of the gospel until it covers the earth.

Now, more specifically, Barnabas and Saul are about to go out on their first missionary journey. They take John Mark along. He could be a real help to them, but he will also show the weaknesses which characterize those who are called to bring the word. Despite this, the gospel will grow and be multiplied.

Questions for discussion:

1. Why do you think the persecution did not fall on the Apostles before this?
2. Would it be profitable for the church if we knew what each Apostle had accomplished? Why are we not told?

3. Can you imagine how Peter can be sound asleep the night before the king's judgment will fall on him? Can we have that kind of faith?
4. Why don't people often expect an answer to their prayers?
5. Was it fair that these (innocent) soldiers had to lose their lives?
6. How must we use our talents? May we make a living with them?
7. Why does the gospel advance so greatly at that time? Are there still such advances?

BEGINNING THE FIRST MISSIONARY JOURNEY

Lesson 16

Acts 13

Sent From the Antioch Church

The beginning of Chapter 13 shows a definite break with the former activity. Jerusalem had still been the center from which the work of the early church proceeded. Now, however, Antioch of Syria becomes the center. Its church will send out the missionaries to the gentile world. In Antioch were prophets and teachers. These New Testament prophets have also been mentioned in chapter 11. In Antioch we again meet with Barnabas and Saul but also with a Symeon, Lucius and Manaen. Nothing is known concerning these men. There has been much speculation, but, that is all it is — speculation. To the church together with its leaders the Holy Spirit makes it clear that Barnabas and Saul are to be separated to the work to which He has called them. The fasting in which the church engages is still part of the Old Testament worship but, of course, they do not offer sacrifices any more, because that would now be an abomination since Christ has come and has given His life as a sacrifice. With prayer and the laying on of hands, the church sends them out into the gentile world with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

We would also be able to say that the Holy Spirit sent them, as well as the church. He only uses the church as His tool to send out these missionaries. Does the Spirit also tell them where to go? Although we do not read of this specifically, it is evident that the Spirit is in charge of all the works of these heralds of the cross. Later He twice forbids Paul to go to the place to which he had intended to go. First they go to Seleucia, which is the seaport for Antioch. Then they set sail for the island, Cyprus. This is the home country of Barnabas — not totally unfamiliar territory.

Mission to Cyprus

The first place they come to is Salamis, where they preach the gospel in the synagogue of the Jews. The Jews had scattered over the whole then-known world and had erected synagogues wherever they went. This is the place where the missionaries of Jesus Christ begin their work. There is in these synagogues a certain bond between the things these men will have to say and the things which are taught here. They come with the message that the Old Testament, which the Jews believed, has now been fulfilled. Almost as an aside, it is mentioned that John Mark was with them as their attendant.

We do not hear of any results of their work in Salamis. They go on to the other side of the island, to the capital city, Paphos. This is the place where the pro-consul has his residence. This dignitary, Sergius Paulus, is a Roman officer, but he is a man of understanding. He does not seem to be satisfied with the religion of the day and the mode of life dictated by the worship in this place of Venus or Aphrodite. He calls for Barnabas and Saul because he wants to hear what they have to say. But, missions will not be easy. Will the ruler of the first place they come to turn to the Lord and be instrumental in turning many others too? Opposition arises immediately. A certain sorcerer, Bar-Jesus or Elymas, opposes them and seeks to influence the pro-consul against the word of God. Saul, now called Paul, attacks him at once and does so in no gentle manner. He calls him a man full of guile and villainy, a son of the devil and enemy of all righteousness. Then the Apostle smites him with blindness so that he has to be led about by another. Upon this word of the Apostle and the attendant miracle, the Pro-consul believes. The gospel has come to Cyprus and it will never be the same!

To the Jew First

The mission on Cyprus has been accomplished for the time being and the Apostles go to the mainland, to Perga in Pamphylia which is in Asia Minor. This will be the area in which much of the mission work of the early church will be done. When they come here, John Mark leaves them. Why? We can only guess. The work apparently proved too strenuous for him. They do not stay in Perga but go to the larger city of Antioch of Pisidia (to be distinguished from Antioch of Syria). Again they go to the synagogue on the Sabbath day. Paul later gives the reasons for going to the Jews first in Romans 9 and 11. This ancient people of God was to hear the glad tidings first. Then the gentiles must hear them. Jesus had given similar orders. The missionaries sit with the worshippers. Both the law and the prophets are read. Then the ruler of the synagogue, seeing strangers, and perhaps knowing something about them, asks them to speak if they choose.

Paul does choose to speak! He has been sent to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ to both Jew and gentile. He will now use somewhat the same approach which Stephen had also used in his defense. He speaks to these people in the synagogue about the history of their own people. Unlike Stephen, he begins with the history of Israel in Egypt. God showed His power to all men in the way in which He led Israel out. He carried them through the wilderness for the space of forty years. This was necessary because this wilderness was not able to support them. He then destroyed the people who lived in Canaan so that there would be a home for His people. All this took about 450 years. These figures have been questioned time and again. This is fruitless. No one knows from which time the Apostle begins nor to what point he extends this time. Besides, he is simply speaking in round numbers. Then the Lord sent Judges to lead the people. This went on until the prophet Samuel. Then they obtained a king just like all the other people

around them. King Saul was of the tribe of Benjamin, doomed to failure from the start, because Judah was to rule. After Saul reigned forty years the Lord put him aside and set David on the throne. This was the man "after His own" heart. These Jews to whom he is speaking know this history very well. He is not teaching them anything new. But, out of the line of King David God has raised up Jesus the Savior. David's words are fulfilled and his purpose has been attained. Out of their own history he shows them the key to that history, Jesus Christ. The Savior, the Messiah, is of the posterity of their hero, David.

He now also brings to their attention the relation of this Jesus to John the Baptist. This forerunner came preaching the gospel of repentance. This is necessary to come to Jesus. This becomes important later when we read of people at Ephesus who were baptized by John but had not heard of the Spirit's coming (Acts 19). The coming of the Messiah must be brought in relation to the history of Israel, but also in relation to the one who the Lord had sent to pave the way for Messiah.

Now that it has been firmly established who Jesus is from the history of God's people and from the prophetic mouth of John the Baptist, Paul calls the people to listen closely because the word of salvation "has been sent to you!" Let it now also be known what has happened to Jesus in Jerusalem. The rulers of the people had never understood the voices of the prophets to which they listened every Sabbath day and they condemned Him. They were thereby fulfilling the prophecies which had come to them, but they are guilty. Even Pilate would have let Him go, but they wouldn't have it. They slew Him. God raised Him from the dead. Through this resurrection it is evident that this was the Messiah. There are many who saw Him after He rose, so that it was not done secretly or in a corner. This resurrection of Jesus is the good news which can now be proclaimed to all men. This resurrection has caused the whole Old Testament to come alive! The promises are there for the taking. He can quote from Psalm 2 or Psalm 16 or Isaiah 45 or Isaiah 49 — all the Scriptures bear witness to this one fact that the Son of God would come to redeem His people. Through this Jesus there is proclaimed to them forgiveness of sins. Through Him they will also find a justification which the law is not able to give them. Both law and prophets will now receive their rightful place. All of them are fulfilled in Jesus Christ. He also warns them with the same word that they may not harden themselves. Today salvation has come to this place!

As the people leave the synagogue and stand outdoors they talk about the "sermon" which they have just heard. There is too much for them to digest at one time. They ask the Apostles to come back the next Sabbath and speak to them again. Many of both Jews and proselytes follow Paul and Barnabas to have a personal word with them. They urge the people to continue in the grace of God.

From Jew to Gentile World

The next Sabbath almost the whole city gathers to hear the word. This could not well be in one building

but may take place out of doors. Multitudes are here to listen to the Apostles. This could become a very large congregation over night! Now we do not even hear what the Apostles say because there is another development which must be dealt with. The Jews are jealous. They have been here for generations and have never had this kind of success. These two men come and the whole city follows them. They begin to contradict the words spoken by Paul. This is dangerous. Paul has spoken the word of God. If they contradict this word, they will blaspheme! Paul and Barnabas do not allow this to go on, but oppose these Jews with the word! It is necessary that the word come to these Jews first, but, if they cast it away and "judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life," they will go to the gentiles. The prophet had spoken of this (Isaiah 49:6).

The loss for the Jew is the gain for the gentile. They rejoice that the word is coming to them and that they will have a place in the Kingdom of God. As many as "were ordained to eternal life believed," says Luke. What clearer statement of the electing love of God can be found anywhere?

The gospel is not confined to this city, but spreads throughout the countryside. The jealousy of the Jews is also not confined to a few words with the Apostles. They stir up "the devout women of honorable estate and the chief men of the city." They are going to turn the most influential people against the Apostles and against the New Testament gospel. As a result the missionaries will have to leave that region because of persecution. As their Lord commanded them, they shake off the dust of their feet as a witness against them and go to Iconium. Those who will not hear will come to the position that they can not hear!

Some disciples are left in this city. Although the Apostles have to leave, the seed has been sown. These disciples rejoice in their faith and have the indwelling of the Spirit to console them.

The march of the gospel has begun. It will be attended by all kinds of difficulties — but the gospel will go on until it has covered the whole earth. No one will be able to stop its onward march!

Questions for discussion:

1. Must the church send out missionaries or may they also be sent out by others? Give reasons for your answer.
2. Was it right for Paul and Barnabas to take John Mark along seeing he had not been designated by the Spirit?
3. Is it good mission policy to take the gospel to the principal cities and to the rulers? Why?
4. Isn't Paul quite harsh in his rebuke of Elymas? Was this proper?
5. Is it a good idea to have an opening for the preaching of the gospel like Paul had when he reviews the history of Israel? Is it well to use the Biblical material to begin the preaching of the word?
6. How are missions and election related? Or does the one stand in the way of the other?
7. Is it understandable that the Jews would be jealous? To what has their jealousy led? ●

GOD'S CALLING

The Office of the Christian Believer⁽⁵⁾

IN THE WORLD

Peter De Jong

The "Forgotten Office"

This series of articles has attempted to focus attention on what has been called "the forgotten office in the church," that of every Christian believer. What does God in His Gospel call you and me as Christians to be and do? Could there be a more interesting and important question for each one of us than this? We have recalled how the Bible teaches that as human beings we were all made in God's image to know, love and serve Him as His prophets priests and kings. From that high condition and status we have all fallen in the "fall" of our first parent. To it, Christ who was promised and came as our Prophet, Priest and King, restores us. We are called by His Gospel to know, trust in, love and serve Him as His prophets, priests and kings (1 Pet. 2:5, 9; Rev. 1:6; 5:10). Taught this in the Bible, we confess it in our Heidelberg Catechism's answer to the question, "Why are you called a Christian? Because by faith I am a member of Christ and so I share in his anointing. I am anointed to confess his name, to present myself to him as a living sacrifice of thanks, to strive with a good conscience against sin and the devil in this life, and afterward to reign with Christ over all creation for all eternity" (XII, 32).

Each Believer's Biblical "Vocation"

We recalled how the Apostle Paul (1 Cor. 7:20-24) urged each to "in that calling wherein he was called . . . therein abide with God." Thus the call to salvation in Christ must be received as a call (or "vocation") to serve the Lord. We should notice that this was said in connection with a discussion of the family relationship of husbands and wives, and broadened to show that it applies also to the socially differing positions of being slaves or free, and the differing backgrounds of being Jew or gentile. Among the Reformers, especially John Calvin observed that, "Every individual's line of life, therefore, as it were, a post assigned him by the Lord." Consequently, "there will be no occupation so mean and sordid (provided we follow our vocation) as not to appear truly respectable, and be deemed highly important in the sight of God" (*Institutes*, III, 10, 6; as cited by Georgia Harkness, cf. Jan. OUTLOOK p. 13).

We have already noticed that especially Paul's letter to the Ephesians sheds light on the believer's office. Each one chosen and called by the gospel (Chapter 1) is made alive with Christ, and made a part of His church (Chapter 2). In that Church each is urged

"to live a life worthy of the calling you have received" (4:1). In order to do that, each needs to benefit from the special offices the Lord has given to assist in his or her full development and equipment for that service. Thus each believer's way of living is to be as obviously different from that of the unbelieving world as light differs from darkness. Instead of the pagan's futile revel in sensuality and impurity (vv. 17-19), the believer's life is to reveal the image of God being restored (v. 24).

In the Family

This transformation of each believer is to change his or her social relationships, beginning with the most fundamental of them, the family. The relationship of husband and wife is thus to be restored as God intended it to be. The roles of the two are not identical, despite present efforts to make them so. Questions have been raised about why the Apostle should give different instructions to husbands than to wives. Are not both to love each other? Of course, they are (5:1). The editor of Calvin's Commentary in a footnote cites an intriguing suggestion of Eadie: Paul was not giving general instructions but, in effect, addressing the practical temptation of each. What is the married man's temptation? Is it not to take his wife for granted? And is not the wife who feels neglected tempted to become irritatingly critical? Accordingly each is enjoined to correct the conduct which causes friction between them — he to keep on loving his wife, "as Christ loved the church," she, instead of giving way to critical resentment, to show her proper deference to her husband (Chapter 5). Viewing the roles of Christian husband and wife as the Divine "vocations" that they are, comes to an especially appropriate expression in the benediction that concludes our older wedding form, "May the Father of all mercies, who of His grace has called you to this holy state of marriage, bind you together in true love and faithfulness and grant you His blessing."

After the pointed directions to husbands and wives, the Ephesian letter (Chapter 6) proceeds to show what the Christian's calling means for parents and children. "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 'Honor your father and mother' — which is the first commandment with a promise — 'that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.' Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction

of the Lord." I recall how years ago a parents' magazine approached the subject of child training. It asked why (and whether) children could be expected to listen to parents. Because the parents are "bigger?" That would only be "bullying," which is hardly a valid reason. Because the parents "know more?" While that may be true, it is not likely to convince many teen-agers. Without any recognized basis for authority, none is likely to be acknowledged by either children or parents. The Christian believer, no longer, like the unbeliever, in revolt against God, is called to live under God's authority everywhere. Therefore children are to "obey their parents in the Lord" — not because the parents can compel it, or are wiser, but because God orders it. Correspondingly, parents, for the same reason, are to "bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord." Their authority is by no means arbitrary or unlimited, as they have to account to God for the way in which they use it for the welfare of the children.

On the Job

Proceeding from the implications of the Lord's calling in the family, the Apostle next highlights the effect of that calling on the daily job in which each may be engaged. It is interesting that the directions given regarding these matters in the letter to the Ephesians parallel very closely those given in the letter to the Colossians, which at this point are more detailed (Col. 4:22ff.). "Slaves (or, in other translations, "Servants"), obey your masters in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to win their favor, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord. Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving. Anyone who does wrong will be repaid for his wrong, and there is no favoritism. Masters, provide your slaves with what is right and fair, because you know that you also have a Master in heaven."

The Bible makes it plain that this calling to serve the Lord Christ must guide each believer in every role and relationship. "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord . . . It is the Lord Christ you are serving." "Whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him" (v. 17). A century ago Abraham Kuyper was calling attention to the breadth of this claim of Christ on every area of life. He stressed this "world and life view" of the Gospel in his teaching, and illustrated it in his own remarkably versatile career as preacher, reformer, editor, educator, and statesman — in which he became Prime Minister of the Netherlands.

While I was a navy chaplain in the Philippines a Lutheran sailor who had shown remarkable ability as an artist asked for some suggestion as to how he might in the future try to serve the Lord as an artist. Among the few books that I had carried half-way around the world was a copy of Kuyper's "Stone Lectures" on Calvinism. I referred him to the one entitled "Calvinism and Art." Although that is hardly Kuyper's best, it was a serious effort to answer exactly

the important question of that Christian serviceman. His was the kind of question every one of us should be asking regarding our calling to office as Christians.

Regarding Government

The Bible repeatedly instructs us about Christian behavior toward civil government. "Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every authority instituted among men: whether to the king, as the supreme authority, or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right" (1 Peter 2:13, 14). The proper duty of a government authority is at some points quite different from that of the individual Christian. Paul, for example, in Romans 12:17ff. enjoins us as Christians, "Do not repay anyone evil for evil . . . If it is possible . . . live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge . . . for it is written: 'It is mine to avenge, I will repay,' says the Lord." This direction for our individual conduct may not be applied to government authority, however, for "He is God's servant, an agent of justice to bring punishment on the wrongdoer" (13:4). Failure to recognize this distinction between our personal duties and the God-given duty of government, especially in our time often misleads bungling churchmen and their followers to oppose proper law enforcement and national defense and to encourage lawlessness and anarchy. Abraham Kuyper, pointing out such distinctions, enunciated what has been called the principle of "sphere sovereignty." The government and its officials should not try to manage the church and the church and its officials should not try to run the government. Although each has a responsibility toward the other, each should mind its own business. While this principle can be misdirected,* the Bible plainly teaches that each one must face his or her own responsibilities (Gal. 6:4; 1 Peter 4:15). Respecting the boundaries between the duty of one and that of another becomes especially important as each one is trying to fulfill his or her office or calling as believer.

Present Misdirection of the Believer's Office

The third article of this series (February OUTLOOK, p. 22) cited an especially apt observation from Gibbs' and Morton's *God's Frozen People* about the destructive error of turning those who should be ministers of the Word into executives. Turning to the conclusion of their second volume, entitled *God's Lively People*, to see where their extensive study of the believer's office has led them, brings a disconcerting surprise. Their last chapters suggest ways in which churches be trained to promote a social and political revolution, if necessary by violence, and warn that the churches must shed their traditions, stop recognizing a difference between believer and unbeliever, and take responsibility for the world, citing Dorothea Solle, the atheist (who was given an important place at the last World Council of Churches meeting)! This policy is defended with the argument that "Christ died for all men" and that "In the Gospel there are no outsiders" (pp. 187, 188). Their study plainly reflects and promotes exactly the trend of the World Council. It is disturbing to see how not only

"mainline" churches, but also nominally evangelical leaders and educators, including many of our own, today are unmistakably moving in this direction.

Notice how completely this ostensibly "Christian" program contradicts that of our Lord. Although He repeatedly fed multitudes, he rebuffed those who wanted to make Him a political revolutionary leader with a blunt, "Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you" (John 6:27). And instead of wiping out the difference between believer and unbeliever He insisted that it must and will become as great as the difference between heaven and hell! A little familiarity with some of these popular treatments of the believer's or laymen's office shows how they and the wide-spread social and political movement which they are promoting, are a crucial part of the antichristian apostasy which the Lord predicted would invade His church.

The letter to the Ephesians which, as we have seen, outlines the believer's responsible place in society, does not develop that role in detail, but proceeds in a quite different direction (Eph. 6:10ff). It warns, "Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes." The Christian "calling" is not to build in a cooperative enterprise with those who reject Christ, but to fight against the devil who is misleading them and against his destructive work. Our Heidelberg Catechism's treatment of the Christian's duty faithfully reflects this Biblical militancy, concluding that we are "to strive against sin and the devil in this life, and afterward to reign with Christ over all creation for all eternity."

Serving God in His Way

The misunderstandings and misdirections that we may observe of the believer's office should not prompt us to reject this important principle, but should prod us into studying the Bible's teaching about it and working to fulfill it. The Lord calls everyone who believes in Him to faithfully serve Him, each in his

and her assigned place and way. This entails a missionary responsibility to confess Christ to people around us and a duty to serve Him in our daily business — a duty assigned God's servants ever since creation (Gen. 1:28) in what has been called the "cultural mandate" to "subdue the earth." Questions often arise about how the Christian's missionary duty and this job responsibility are to be related. Perhaps the best answer to those questions is that we may not really separate these two in the life of the individual, for the service of Christ as Lord and Saviour includes both. The enormous influence of the ordinary believers' testimony to Christ has often resulted from the way in which their faithfulness in their work demonstrated the reality of their confession. This is not to say that the church should involve itself in every kind of social and material activity — that is a mistake that often interferes with effectively bringing the gospel. But the individual believer's duties are much wider and more diverse than the work of the church organization. The Lord had ordered His apostle to go to the nations "to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive remission of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in" Him (Acts 26:18). That saving message was not only faithfully proclaimed by him and his fellow-missionaries. It "rang out" from the lives of those who believed as they "turned from idols to serve the living and true God." We live in a time when the hostile forces of secularism in every way try to crowd the testimony to Christ out of every area of life and society. May we, like those early believers (1 Thessalonians 1) prayerfully and earnestly seek to acknowledge Christ, in whatever area of service is assigned us, in everything that we do. That is our calling and sacred office as believers in Him. ●

**The philosopher, Dooyeweerd, and his followers tried to make this "sphere sovereignty" the organizing principle to interpret all reality, sometimes carrying it to lengths and in a direction which the Bible nowhere sanctions.*

Adam and Evolution⁽¹⁾

Lester De Koster

1. The Bible knows of a First Adam and a Second Adam. Let's, with due respect for the Second Adam, call them A-I and A-II.

The First and Second Adam together form an axis about which both the Bible and the whole of human history, as interpreted by the Bible, revolve.

The Second Adam is, of course, our Lord Jesus Christ. He is a distinct and individual person.

The First Adam is, according to the Scripture, no less definite a person. He is so much an individual that St. Paul speaks of A-I as a "type" of A-II (Rom. 5:14). Because this is so, what is revealed in the Scripture about the Christ sheds light upon A-I. There are, indeed, theologians who believe that the Genesis account of A-I can be rightly understood only as confirmed and illumined by the Gospel accounts of A-II. The unique individuality, then, of the Christ requires

the unique individuality of the First Adam. Together, as we have said, A-I and A-II form the poles of human history.

The Bible, in a word, obliges us to acknowledge the unique and individual person-hood of both the First and the Second Adam.

2. It is serious business to deal disobediently with the First Adam.

Our Lord even warns that those who do not believe the writings of Moses are unable to believe His words, "for he wrote of me" (John 5:46). Where did Moses write of the Christ? St. Paul teaches us (or better, the Holy Spirit says through Paul) that when Moses wrote of A-I he was describing "a type of the one who was to come" (Rom. 5:14). Moses could hardly write more specifically about the Christ than when he writes about His ante-type. "He wrote of me," Jesus says — if you would hear Me, listen to Moses!

Could, then, the "type" (A-I) be ignored, or set aside, or blurred in a mist of evolutionary or cultural speculation without affecting our ability to hear the One typified?

"How can you believe," the Lord asks our generation no less than He asked the Jews, "who receive glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the only God?" (John 5:44). That's a very exact description of how the evolutionary theorists of our times scratch each other's backs as they spin out their speculative webs. "But," the Lord goes on to say, regarding Moses, "if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe my words?" (John 5:47). And nowhere, as we have said, does Moses write more particularly about the Second Adam than in the Genesis account of the First Adam, as St. Paul makes clear not only as quoted from Romans but elsewhere — as we shall see.

Casting doubt on the Genesis account of the First Adam has, I repeat, momentous implications for the Church. These are, it seems, mostly ignored in the mad theological rush to board the latest evolutionary bandwagon to go riding wildly imagined ribbons of time into a dark and baffling past.

3. In our era, the emergence of the dogma of evolution has clouded the teaching of Genesis 1-3 in a haze of murky speculation. And the definite portrayal of A-I provided by Moses, and assumed by the Bible, vanishes in the mist. In its place have arisen a host of competing guesses. While some brazenly deny — in the very face of Christ's warning — that Moses wrote the Pentateuch at all! This is to be expected, of course, of unbelief, but it can be heard among those who in the same breath claim undivided loyalty to the Christ and His Scripture.

It might be supposed that at least among ourselves in the CRC there would be stalwart refusal to bow the knee of Genesis to the Baals of evolutionary fancy. We would gladly, one might suppose, in order to hear the Lord, give ear to Moses. It may be that firm com-

mitments to the literal authenticity of Genesis do indeed sound clearly from the academic ramparts — school, college and seminary — sustained by the CRC to confront the world. It may be so, but if such affirmations there be, they seem to be lost amidst a crowd of trendy evolutionary fashions — woven out of limitless strands of time on the looms of undisciplined imagination.

There seem to be those among us who want it both ways: 1) to join the "in" crowd uncritically committed to evolutionary dogma as to the origins of man, while 2) professing an undivided allegiance to the Scripture as God's inspired Word. It is obvious that anyone who thus tries to run in two directions at once will add little strength to the legions of the Lord.

What never comes quite clear in scenarios substituted for Genesis is precisely how A-I, and his correspondence to A-II, fit into an evolutionary scheme. Nor is this clarified when evolution is cautiously sprinkled with presumably holy water from a fount labeled "theistic!"

No doubt you too, reader, have wondered just how those who profess obedience to the Scripture do in fact bow in their theorizing to the Moses' account of Adam and the Biblical parallelism between A-I and A-II.

Moses' account is vivid, precise, clear — and grows the more instructive the more one subjects himself to it. Evolutionary hypotheses are breezy, belligerent, cocky and sterile — and hint of their hollow pretensions on first acquaintance. Moses for the childlike; evolutionism for the childish!

Yet, one may suspect, if one does not know, that among us, too, in practice it is often Genesis which is quietly being subordinated to evolution-ism rather than the other way around. Some theorists will blandly admit not knowing how to harmonize Genesis with their -ism while none-the-less giving their allegiance rather to the -ism than to Moses. Such indifference to the authority of Scripture is all the more distressing if one discovers that so it seems to be in his children's classrooms.

4. This essay is focused on the question: how do those who embrace evolutionary theories harmonize these with the biblical teaching regarding A-I and A-II? Or, if such harmony cannot be achieved, when will they openly choose between the -ism and the Word?

The issue is indeed momentous, but not complex. Adam and Eve had a clear choice: the Word of God or the word of the serpent. So do we: the Word of God or the word of the -ism.

Let's hear that choice made!

5. Some try to avoid making a decision, at least in public, by arguing that divine revelation appears in two "books," the Bible and Nature. We must, it is said, be equally attentive to both.

This has a pious ring to it, but it is a deadend evasion! Books come to us in words — with a difference! The words of the Bible are divinely inspired. The words read out of, or into, the "book" of Nature are

always fallible and human. Thus the two "books" are not on a par; they by no means enjoy equal authority. Therefore, one can't get away with talking of man's account of divine "revelation" in nature as of equal authority with the divinely inspired Scripture. Not at all! If the Christian is sure of anything, he is sure that nothing of human composition can speak with the certainty of the Holy Word.

The choice, as regards A-I and his relation to A-II, and their place in some evolutionary scheme, is always absolute: God's Word or man's?

When will those who entertain, in public or in private, on podium or in classroom, evolutionary hypotheses, make that choice openly before us all?

It requires no particular genius to mouth the latest evolutionary speculations, and to reel off millions or billions of years as if anyone knew what such words mean. The evolutionary theorist bedazzles himself with pompous sounds to which neither he nor anyone else can attach any content. He fills up his vacuums with zeroes, childishly supposing that adding nothing to nothing produces something! But what meaningful difference is there between, say, one million or one billion years? Adding zeroes tells us nothing — which is what zero stands for, after all.

The parent who recklessly wants his child victimized by such verbal bamboozlement has the whole range of secular schools to choose from — if only the time-bank numbers game were confined to these! California has just required its public schools to pour even more evolutionism down helpless throats, while efforts to add creation to schoolroom diets are viciously denounced as bigotry — by those who thus betray themselves as bigots!

What the believer expects, however, is that those to whom he entrusts the training of his children — and the future of his denomination — dare to hear Moses along with the Second Adam and thus, if need be, take up the cross of academic derision to rise above the crowd in solemn affirmation of the authority of the Genesis account of A-I. Not, indeed, as their own discovery, but as Truth breathed into the Scripture, and confirmed in the Scripture by the Holy Spirit.

The believer rightly expects those who teach and speak for him to take the Bible's rather than the evolutionist's view of the First Adam. And mindful of endless biblical warnings against cowardly disobedience, the believer anticipates no ultimate blessing upon the work of those who prefer the words of man over those of the Scripture.

What, then, is the Bible's view of the First Adam?

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6. The Bible takes the First Adam very literally. Indeed, the Bible establishes a parallel relationship between A-I and A-II in which the literal Second Adam vindicates and confirms what is said of the First.

The Bible views the First Adam — and Eve — as historical, as individual and as brought into existence by immediate acts of God in very specific ways. Just as the Bible reveals very specifically how God brought the Second Adam into history.

Evolutionary theorists, on the other hand, seem to have only the fuzziest guesses as to how the biblical Adam and Eve can be fitted into their speculations. And many, of course, relegate the Genesis account to the realm of myth or saga or "teaching model" — linguistic tricks for concealing the fact that the Word's control of their speculations is minimal or non-existent.

While a discrepancy between the vivid teaching of Genesis and the hazy theorizing of the -ism does not seem to bother those evolutionary theorists whom I have encountered, the issue is, I repeat, exceedingly crucial and relevant. Not only because it forces a clear choice of momentous consequences between the Word of God and the words of man, but also because the whole history of man, and the divine economy of salvation, both take their point of departure from the intimate relationship biblically established between A-I and A-II. The approach of the Church to the reality of sin and evil, to salvation and the life of obedience, and to culture and the world at large moves within fields of force drawn between the twin poles of A-I and A-II. The disastrous effects upon society and upon persons and upon the Church, of ideologies which ignore the A-I — A-II tension is obvious.

Playing games with Adam is for far higher stakes than evolutionists seem aware of.

That is why the believer has every right to ask the evolutionary theorist — if he professes loyalty to the Scriptures — to explain in language no less clear and specific than that of the Word just how the events of Genesis 1-3 are accommodated in his theorizing. If ever you do, try to keep him from buying you off with checks drawn upon his fanciful and limitless bank of time. Such checks bounce. What you want is a simple explanation of how the events recorded in Genesis 1-3 harmonize with his evolutionary hypothesis, or, lacking that, his candid admission that for him the -ism comes first and Genesis had better make do. Then at least we all know where we are. But, alas, don't, as they say, hold your breath until you get a satisfying answer.

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7. Let's sketchily observe how the Bible itself views Genesis 1-3. I say sketchily because the events related in Genesis 1-3, and what happened to man, to history, and to the world as consequence of those events, everywhere underlie the Word. Mystify the relationship between A-I and A-II by beclouding Genesis 1-3 in speculative vapors and for you the Bible goes adrift, anchors do not hold, and the bridge from time into eternity loses its footing in history.

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8. Let it be said at once that to authenticate Genesis 1-3 for the believer it is enough to remind ourselves that, like the rest of the Bible, Genesis too is Spirit-breathed. What the Word says, God says.

Unhappily, the believer is sometimes beguiled by those who ask, with seeming innocence, "Yes, this is what Genesis says, but what does it mean?"

Much as the child tries to evade parental instructions through the same maneuver — “this is what you said, Mom, but I thought you meant . . . !”

Taking license from the same subterfuge, speculation pays lip service to Genesis and real service to whatever -ism flies high at the moment.

The Bible simply understands Genesis to mean what the Spirit through Moses says. This the Spirit re-emphasizes elsewhere in the Scripture. He not only inspired the Genesis account but has chosen to verify it beyond doubt elsewhere in the Word.

9. Having described in Genesis, for example, the creation of man, the Spirit chooses to confirm that account by writing to us through St. Paul: “For Adam was formed first, then Eve . . .” (I Tim. 2:13). Two things here: 1) God’s forming Adam (of the dust of the earth), and 2) God’s forming Eve (from Adam’s side) — confirmed as recounted in Genesis. First Adam; then Eve out of Adam.

This account of Eve’s arrival on the scene is not likely to be a popular view these days, but is a God-breathed one none-the-less.

Let’s invite the evolutionist to show how his theory accounts for this subtle distinction in the order of appearance of this first human pair on the stage of history: First the man, and then the woman from the man!

(To be continued next month.)

Dr. Lester De Koster, former Calvin College professor and editor of *The Banner*, lives at Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Now a SEXIST Catechism

Peter De Jong

The Christian Reformed Board of Publications at its annual February meeting decided to have its liturgical committee make appropriate changes in the Heidelberg Catechism to meet the standards of inclusive language. It is to have this revision of the Catechism available for approval by the June meeting of the synod so that it can be included in the expected publication of a new *Psalter Hymnal*.

If anyone seeks to revise one of the churches’ confessions of faith, there is a proper (“gravamen”) pro-

cedure for him to bring the requested changes to the attention of the churches for their extended study and consideration. Even if such a change is accepted, because of the importance of a change in the “forms of unity” which, like a constitution, are the contracts which bind the churches together, such a change is not valid until it is approved by two synods. Has any church or classis been asking for another revision of the Heidelberg Catechism? Has any gravamen been submitted against the Catechism which was carefully revised and accepted not long ago? Of course not! Although there was reportedly some opposition in the Board, the majority quietly bypassed all such consideration as apparently irrelevant.

If such legal requirements as these were not significant enough to be considered by the Board, we should remember that the C.R. Synod only last year decided “THAT ALL REPORTS OF STUDY COMMITTEES AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF BOARDS OR STANDING COMMITTEES AFFECTING DOCTRINAL, ETHICAL, OR CHURCH ORDER STATEMENTS OF THE CHURCH, SHALL BE IN THE HANDS OF THE CHURCHES FOR AT LEAST SIX MONTHS PRIOR TO BEING ACTED UPON BY SYNOD” (Acts 1985, p. 802). In this case the board proposing the changes does not even itself know four months before the synod meeting what the changes are to be!

In trying to understand this extraordinary procedure of the Board, perhaps we ought to recall that only last year in its treatment of another creed, the Belgic Confession, a special committee, supposed to update its English, was at least partially successful in getting away with just such an illegal change of a creed (Cf. 1985 *OUTLOOKS* March, pp. 8ff., June, pp. 17, 18). Is one successful illegality now encouraging another?

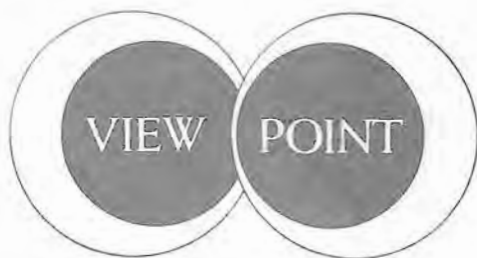
What is of such transcendent importance about the proposed revision that would justify ignoring all considerations of creed, church order and proper procedure to secure its passage? In this case, as in the one just mentioned, the change is one dictated by the feminist movement. It is evident that when the demands of that movement appear, all considerations of the Bible, creed, church order or synod decisions must give way for them.

It appears that the Board is treating this matter as a comparative triviality. (And perhaps some individual changes of phrase here and there might not appear important). But this “triviality” shows in a dramatic way what is happening to the religion and practice of our churches and their agencies. (A real shift to “inclusive language” would even have to alter the doctrine of the Trinity with its confession of the Father and the Son!)

C. S. Lewis in his little essay on “Priestesses in the church” (in *God in the Dock*, pp. 234-239) observed that this issue must not be decided by people’s abilities or expediency, but by whether our religion is guided by Divine revelation or whether it is merely a return to the old pagan natural religion that had its goddesses and priestesses.

A main article in the February 21, 1986 *Christianity Today*, by James R. Edwards, “Does God Really Want to Be Called ‘Father’?” makes the same point.

"Feminist theology . . . has gone beyond its origins in women's suffrage and civil rights. With Promethean intimations it is clamoring for a resymbolization of Christianity based on categories of feminism. Such theology, to quote Elizabeth Achtemeier of Union Theological Seminary (Va.), is 'in the process of laying the foundations for a new faith and a new church that are, at best only loosely related to apostolic Christianity.'" Later she is quoted again as saying, "I am sure that much of feminist theology is a return to Baalism. . . . Many women, in their dedication to the feminist movement, are being slowly wooed into a new form of religion, widely at variance with the Christian faith. Most such women have no desire to desert their Christian roots, any more than many German Christians had when they accepted National Socialism's resymbolization of the faith in Nazi Germany." The writer proceeds, "Consider this question from Katharine Sakenfeld in *Feminist Interpretation of the Bible*: 'How can feminists use the Bible, if at all?' The structure of the question determines that the Bible is a lesser authority than feminism." I am not suggesting that the Board of Publications intends to desert the Christian faith. But its casual dealing with our basic Reformed creed shows that for it the feminist demands take precedence over considerations of Scripture, creed, or church order! Is that not practicing a different kind of religion from that which we profess? Will the coming synod endorse this irresponsible and illegal, sexist revision of the Heidelberg Catechism? ●



"SURPRISED BY JOY"

Evan K. Gibson in his *C. S. Lewis, Spinner of Tales*, a guide to that author's fiction, recalls Lewis' early *Screwtape Letters*, a series of imaginary letters which one devil writes to another about conducting their campaign against God as "the Enemy" (p. 108). More than once Screwtape "describes God as a hedonist at heart. This derogatory word, which usually means one who spends his life seeking and enjoying pleasure, is used ironically to express a great truth about the divine nature. The love which is at the center of the Trinity, of course, produces pleasure — pleasure for all creatures who are in harmony with God.

"Lewis even has Screwtape quote from Psalm 16, 'At His right hand are "pleasures for evermore"' . . . He admits that 'the Enemy' invented pleasures, and that all of the researches of Hell have not been able to produce a single joy. God has filled His world with hot baths, cool drinks, fragrant mornings, and breathtaking sunsets and, to the disgust and misery of Hell, delights in seeing His creatures enjoying themselves."

It is highly significant that Lewis entitled his autobiography which details the story of his conversion to the Christian Faith, *Surprised by Joy*.

These observations highlight an important truth which ought to have more attention than we at times give it. Today we have to oppose a degenerating society that, as predicted (2 Tim. 3:4), can be characterized as being "lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God," and as Christian "soldiers," we need to be disciplined to endure hardship (2:3). We must not, however, overlook God's Word's stress on the joys of His children. We need to emphasize that for our own and for our children's encouragement, as well as for a proper Christian testimony in this world.

The Apostle Paul reminds us that we must trust "in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy" (1 Tim. 6:17). Our Lord taught us that He is "the vine" and we are "the branches" (John 15:5ff.). Any branch which is separated from the vine will produce nothing, wither and be discarded. The Lord wants us to thrive and be productive, to rely in prayer upon Him, and to be guided by His commandments toward such productive living for Him. And He adds, "These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full." That is the way of Psalm 16 to "fulness of joy" and "pleasures for evermore." ●

PDJ

RETHINKING CONGREGATIONALISM (JANUARY OUTLOOK, p. 22)

I would like to respond to the article of my namesake's sake in the January '86 issue of this magazine. Though we agree on many things, I would like to express my disagreement with this particular article. I do not think that the situation in the CRC at the present time warrants "a parting of ways." Readers of this magazine know that I am far from happy about many things going on in the CRC today, and we must do what we can to change those things and bring the church back to a more confessional basis. We need to awaken a lot more members of the church to what is going on, and we need to be more firm and adamant in our refusal to go along with unscriptural tendencies. There is far too much apathy and complacency among the general membership as well as the leaders. We must pray for a genuine confessional renewal in our churches, and work hard to achieve it. This is our task at the present time, as I see it, rather than abandoning ship.

Let me respond more specifically with a number of points:

1. I sense a certain "defeatist" attitude in the article of my colleague: "We are dreaming if we think that we can... bring the Liberal mind back to sound orthodoxy." "If we remain, we will lose everything we think we can regain." "If (there) is not ground enough for action now, nothing in the future will be either." Etc. I fear that such an attitude will only hasten that which we fear the most. It sounds too much like Elijah: "I am the only one left." God calls us to be faithful in doing our task and "contending earnestly for the faith once for all delivered to the saints," and we must leave the results to Him. If we give up and sit back and do nothing, we are only hastening the demise of the CRC as a Reformed church. Throughout history God has often used a few people to bring about great change (think of Gideon, Josiah, Luther, Calvin, etc.). Defeatism never gets one anywhere. We may be discouraged at times (I am too), but we shouldn't be defeatist. We may not be able to bring the liberal mind back to orthodoxy, but we may be instrumental in bringing the church back to a more confessional stand.

2. I realize that my colleague was in the Netherlands recently, and what he saw there did not exactly revive his optimism. I can fully understand that, and I can see that this also influenced the writing of his article. I have often said myself that in the Geref. Kerken the "verontrusten" (concerned) always bark but never bite. It is a fact that they tend constantly to "move back the line" at which the final stand will be taken. That is sad but true. And in that regard Schaeffer's warning is apropos. It happens so easily, so imperceptibly. It's the old frog story: heat him up slowly and he will boil to death. I don't want to underestimate the danger we face in this respect. We see it clearly in the Geref. Kerken. (A considerable number of people, of course, have left for more orthodox church-communions, but not in any organized way).

At the same time, we must keep at least two things in mind: The situation in the CRC is not by any means identical with that in the Geref. Kerken. We may be following them. (Contrary to what the Council of CRC's in Canada said recently, I believe we are more influenced by what goes on in the Geref. Kerken than we care to admit.) But the situations are far from identical. And one may not just leave the church at the first sign of defection. There is no perfect church on earth, and defects afflict the best churches. Just because a church takes the first step to apostasy does not yet warrant a parting of the ways.

Secondly, it is not an inexorable law of history that things have to go the way they did in the Dutch Gereformeerde Kerken. We are responsible agents, and we can only blame ourselves if we continue to compromise. That is our decision. We are not pawns on the chess-board of (ecclesiastical) history. Personally, I say that if the CRC ever gets to the place where the Gereformeerde Kerken is today, I will no longer be a member of our church. I could not in good conscience before the Lord remain a member of such a church. I hope that if and when that time should come for us, I would have the courage and integrity to stand by my words, also and especially for the sake

of my children. In any case, it will remain my decision, and I will be responsible for it.

Interlude: I realize full well that in a real sense those who remain loyal to the confessions of the church are not those who "leave." They are the continuation of the true church, as my colleague also puts it: "We are not withdrawing from the Chr. Ref. Church." H. De Cock and the "Vrijgemaakten" said the same thing, and they were both right. But the point is that in actual practice there is a separation, a parting of the ways, and that always involves some separation among brothers too. That must never be undertaken lightly. Here I would like to reiterate what G. Kamminga wrote in the same issue of OUTLOOK: "I would urge all the members who want to liberalize the church to pack up and peddle their liberal ideologies elsewhere, and take the ministers and schools who think as they do with them." Amen!

3. There is still a large number of members in the CRC who want to hold to our confessions and who are concerned about what is going on in the CRC. We must stimulate them to action rather than abandon them at this time. We need a bit of Asaph's spirit: "If I had said, 'I will speak thus,' I would have betrayed this generation of your children" (Ps. 73:15).

4. When does the time come to "abandon" the church, to leave the sinking ship? That is not an easy question and the answer does not come easily either. I do not agree with those who say that they will only "leave" when they get kicked out (as happened to De Cock). I believe there may come a time when a believer is duty bound to leave a corrupt church. As I said before, for me as a Reformed believer that time has now come in the Gereformeerde Kerken. I thank God for men like Lindeboom, Kwast, Van Dyk, Runia and others who continue to oppose the liberalism within their churches, but I believe they are fighting a losing battle and would have a greater and more beneficial influence if they left those churches.

I believe too, that local circumstances can make a difference. What is the situation in one's own local congregation? Is it possible to hear good preaching and belong to a congregation where there is biblical discipline? That will influence one's decision. It is never easy to say just where the line is beyond which one may not go. I believe the following quotation from James M. Wilson, which appeared in a magazine some years ago, has real merit:

Her (the Church's) constitution, as it lies in the Word of God, is perfect; but defects still exist in the best churches. And it is far from easy — is it possible? — to prepare a minute statement of the marks of a true church, which will render easy the task of deciding in every case, absolutely and at once, whether a society can be reckoned a true church or not. And yet, every intelligent Christian admits that a church, once genuine in its character, may become completely apostate. To draw the line and say, just here it ought to be abandoned, is not easy. The truth is, all questions of this sort must, as they occur, be left for decision, under the guidance of general principles, to the enlightened judgment, pure hearts, and honest purposes of the faithful in Christ (orig. ital.).

One must consider also the biblical evidence: the O.T. Israelites were stiffnecked and hard-hearted and forsook the Lord time and again. But He did not abandon them, though He punished them for their sins. Some members of the Corinthian church denied the resurrection (I Cor. 15); the Galatian church had been "bewitched" by false teachers; the church in Sardis had a name that she was alive, but she was dead; the church in Laodicea was neither hot nor cold. Yet all are addressed as churches of the Lord Jesus Christ. This should give room for caution when we consider secession. Christ's prayer in John 17, though often misused by liberals, should have proper use and weight for those who love the truth. The multiplicity of churches nowadays should not sit lightly with us. Even the Reformed family is badly divided. Surely this gives food for thought.

5. We must also look at the wider ecclesiastical situation. If we leave the CRC, where do we go? Start another Ref. church? I believe we would have the duty to unite with an existing Reformed church which is faithful to the creeds (e.g. Canadian Reformed, Free Reformed, etc.). (I sometimes long for a church communion where we could all be one, as we ought to be). But is the grass always greener on the other side of the fence? Are the church-communions mentioned above free from problems, and would we like everything that takes place there? What is more, have they had a positive and noticeable effect on Canadian culture? Does history not teach us that church-separation often brings with it separation in other spheres — school, labor unions (CLAC) etc.? Is that not a sad situation? Must that always take place? Is there no room for cooperation in non-ecclesiastical organizations? Must we have a proliferation of schools and other organizations? The whole business makes me very sad at times. And that is something we must take into consideration before acting hastily. Even groups that have left the CRC recently are not united. Is that the way to go? Church splits (secessions) often have ramifications that go far beyond the church.

I realize that some of my "conservative" friends will not be too happy with this article. That is too bad, but does not bother me too much. I think my record is clear as to where I stand. I am as concerned as anyone about the situation in the CRC, and I have not been silent about it. At the same time, I want to do what is right and pleasing in the sight of the Lord and best for His church. For that reason I have written this article.

J. Tuininga, Lethbridge, Alta.

MID-AMERICA REFORMED SEMINARY

Though I am a board member of Mid-America Reformed Seminary, I am not writing this so much as a board member but just as a personal note to prospective seminarians. To them I say: Consider Mid-America for your seminary training. I can assure you that you will not regret it. You will get a good solid, basic Reformed training in theology which will stand you in good stead throughout your ministry.

At our most recent board meeting, a fourth professor was given an appointment — in the field of systematic theology. (By the time you read this we should know his decision). If that appointment is accepted, Mid-America will have four full-time professors, all able and well qualified men. The basic faculty will be in place then for the time being, and it is a faculty of which we can be proud and for which we can be thankful. Students, give them a try and you will find out for yourselves. You will receive a good Reformed perspective for the work of ministry.

The student body is still small. That has disadvantages, no doubt, but also advantages: a small, close-knit community, where there is ample time for private talks and advice from the faculty. Bigger is not always better. Please do not be intimidated by those who will try to discourage you from going to Mid-America. We are here to help you as much as we can, and you will have the support of a growing number of people. Be willing to stand up for your convictions and to take a few knocks, if necessary. It will prepare you to endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ, and for the inevitable knocks that come along later in the ministry. The church needs people with backbone, people who are willing to stand alone if necessary, who do not always go along with the stream.

So once again: Think seriously about coming to Mid-America, young men. I wholeheartedly recommend it. Your training will in no way be inferior. ●

Jelle Tuininga, Lethbridge, Alta.

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