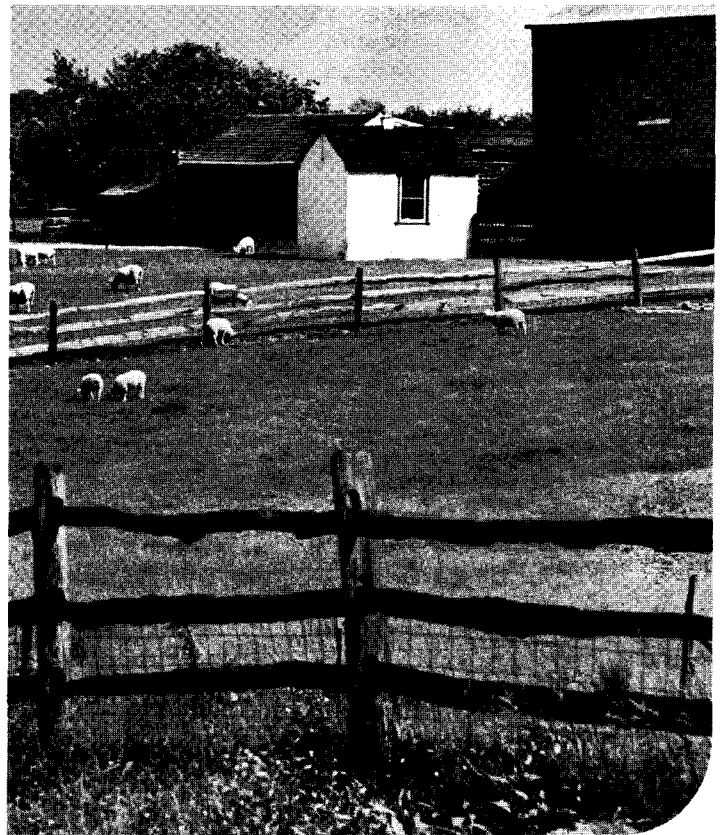
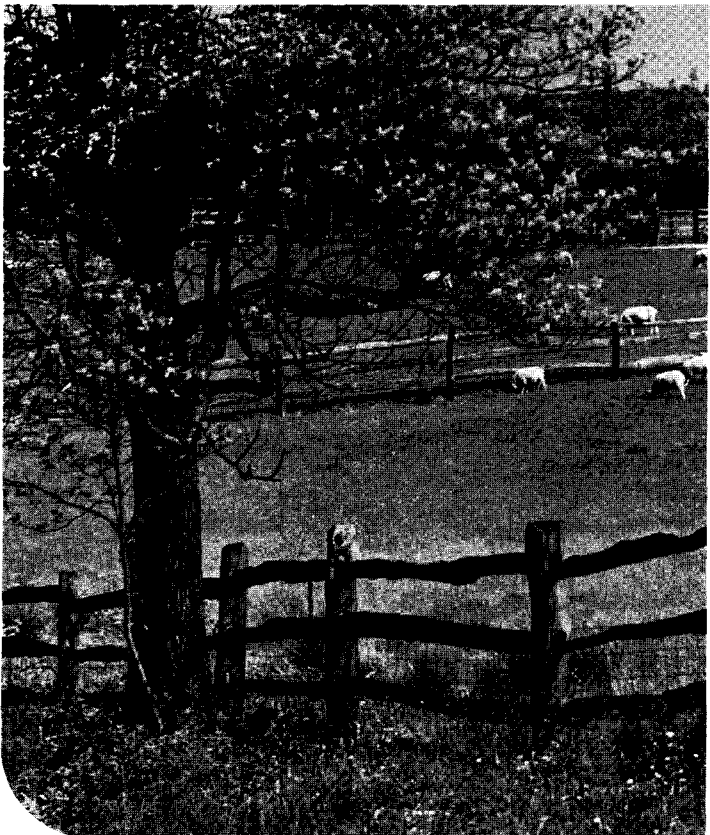


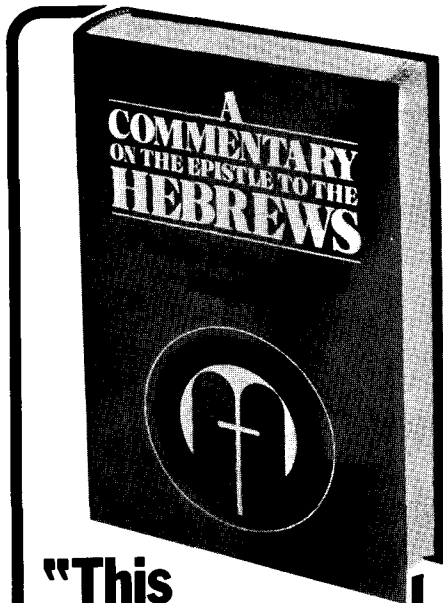
The Presbyterian Guardian



IN THIS ISSUE:

ALSO . . .





"This is a rich commentary..."

Dr. Hughes always has an eye for the theological implications of the text (and) is able to draw to a greater extent than most commentators on his expert knowledge of the history of interpretation of the epistle...In addition (he) reaches his own eminently sane exegetical conclusions.

"All in all, this is a commentary which will be a standard resource for students of Hebrews and one which will definitely be used in my own course on this letter."

—Andrew T. Lincoln
Gordon-Conwell
Theological Seminary



A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews

by Philip Edgcumbe Hughes
3495 Cloth 656 pages \$14.95

at your bookstore
WM. B. EERDMANS PUBLISHING CO.
537
255 JEFFERSON AVE SE GRAND RAPIDS MICH 49502

Letters

More on Psalm-singing

I write as a concerned brother to comment on the editor's response to Renwick Adam's letter in the February issue of the *Guardian*.

First, the difference between "liberty" and "advocacy" in worship is clearly seen in the case of Nadab and Abihu, who felt that their "strange fire" was a matter of "liberty"; but they died for lack of "advocacy," or God-given warrant.

Second, concerning the regulative principle: Of course it is not the sole possession of those who sing the songs written by God exclusively. These people, however, are the only ones who implement it consistently (and incidentally, in accord with the Westminster standards).

Third, I find it strange that a Reformed Christian would try to make a distinction between the Christ revealed by the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament psalms and the Christ revealed in the New Testament. Christ said the Scriptures testify of him and the apostles used the psalms in testifying of him. The Psalms not only speak of the Savior as he lived and as he died (with a psalm on his lips) but also of his coming again.

Fourth, Scripture nowhere warrants the writing or singing of uninspired songs, nor does it promise the Spirit's aid in doing so, as it does with prayer.

Fifth, God never places the uninspired writings of men on a par with Scripture and it is inconceivable that the mere writings of men could supersede the Scripture in Christian worship — yet this has happened in many churches.

Sixth, if as Colossians 3:16 proclaims, we are to teach and admonish each other with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, how can anyone have human hymns replace the Scripture as the *only* rule of faith and practice? Does not 2 Timothy 3:16-17 say that it is Scripture that teaches and admonishes to make a man complete, equipped for every good work? How then do the psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs of uninspired men replace, or even augment, the psalms, hymns, and

spiritual songs of the Spirit of Christ?

Seventh, the editor's argument for the use of musical instruments proves too much. Since the regulative principle also forbids the subtracting from worship of what God has commanded, would the editor be prepared to implement the entire scope required by Psalm 149:6 or 150:6? Obviously, neither psalm is speaking of public worship alone.

Assuredly, trusting in the finished work of Christ, one would not use Psalm 51:19 as a prooftext for sacrificing bulls according to the ceremonial law. So, why continue the use of instrumental music of the ceremonial law? God instituted the use of musical instruments by direct command in conjunction with the ceremonial typological offerings (2 Chronicles 29:25-30); God ended these same types and shadows by the sending of his Son as a sacrifice for sin. Why return to types and shadows?

Rather (1) we ought to use the Spirit-written psalms as warranted for New Testament worship by precept in Colossians 3:16, Ephesians 5:19, and by example (in connection with the first Lord's Supper) in Matthew 26:30. (2) We ought to use the only means of making melody warranted by the New Testament, "making melody with your heart" (Eph. 5:19), and "the fruit of our lips" (Heb. 13:15).

Among my prayers is the petition that all Christians may soon, in gladness, unite in using the only "catholic" Book of Praise — the Spirit-given psalms, as we worship the Savior, and that all may glorify God with the perfect Book of Praise, given by God, warranted by him — rather than the spotted lambs of human invention that have so often replaced God's own Word.

"How blessed are all those who take refuge in him" (Psalm 2:12).

Robert A. Miller
Ref. Presbyterian Seminary
Pittsburgh, Penna.

Point by point

(1) The example of Nadab and Abihu is not relevant. The General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church felt that Scripture gave it liberty in the choice of hymns in public worship; Nadab and Abihu made no such claim for their "strange fire."

The Presbyterian Guardian is published eleven times each year, every month except for a combined issue in July-August, by the Presbyterian Guardian Publishing Corporation, 7401 Old York Road, Philadelphia, PA 19126, at the following rates, payable in advance, postage prepaid: \$4.25 per year (\$3.75 in clubs of ten or more; special rate for "every-family churches" on request). Second class mail privileges authorized at the Post Office, Philadelphia, Pa.

(2) The editor's concern in this subject is that those persuaded of exclusive psalmody might recognize that some of us sing hymns in a belief that this is fully warranted in Scripture and thus fully within the "regulative principle of worship" as defined in the Westminster Confession.

(3) Mr. Miller misses the point. I made no distinction between the Christ revealed in the Old Testament and the Christ in the New. But surely there is a great distinction between the fullness of revelation about Christ in the two testaments.

(4) Colossians 3:16 and Ephesians 5:19 fully warrant the use of hymns based on the total revelation of Christ in both testaments. The parallel to "let the word of Christ dwell in you richly" is "be filled with the Spirit" (Ephesians 5:18). And the context in both passages clearly includes prayer along with singing (Col. 3:17; Eph. 5:20).

(5) Nobody here is saying that uninspired writings are on a par with Scripture. That some people do say this proves nothing for the question at issue.

(6) We are indeed to admonish one another. And not only in singing, but in preaching the Word and even in prayer. Neither of these acts of public worship are restricted to direct quotation of Scripture. But both are the Spirit-guided expressions of fallible men, proclaiming the Word of God truly but not infallibly. In what sense, or for what reason, is singing different?

(7) Would the editor be prepared to implement Psalm 149:6? Yes, though his two-edged sword for today is the Word of God (Ephesians 6:17). I don't even see what the problem might be in Psalm 150:6.

Mr. Miller seems to believe that instrumental music in God's worship only began with the ceremonial arrangements for the temple. But if so, that is applicable also to many of the psalms. Should we omit them from Christian worship just because they were originally intended for temple use? I can see that a sacrificed bull is a type and symbol of Christ. But in what sense is a musical instrument a type or shadow?

As I read Colossians 3:16 and Ephesians 5:19, I am impressed with the richness of the revelation of Christ we have. May our singing of his praises be based on the full revelation that we New Testament believers have. And may those who cannot agree at least accept that this position is meant to be faithful to the Word and consistent in its application.

— John J. Mitchell

NEWS BULLETINS FROM THE

O.P.C. GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The Forty-fourth General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church convened on Thursday evening, June 2, at Bethel O. P. Church in Oostburg, Wisc., and was still in session on Friday, June 10, as this report was being prepared.

The Rev. Wendell L. Rockey, Jr., pastor of the Presbyterian Church of Cape Cod, was elected moderator. His efficiency — and wit — helped immensely in an often tense assembly.

A special offering sometime in 1978 for improvement of pensions for retired ministers was authorized. A special committee on retirement housing needs was also erected.

Despite voiced doubts, membership in the Reformed Ecumenical Synod was continued. The assembly, however, refused to adopt recommendations to urge the Presbyterian Church in America and the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod, to consider seeking RES membership.

The greatest amount of time was expended on matters relating to the Combined Budget and the Committee on Stewardship. A proposal to employ a full-time general secretary was initially rejected by a 3-2 vote. After a later reconsideration, and with the urging of a special Committee to Review the Combined Budget, the proposal was adopted by a large majority. The concern of some to continue to study the biblical bases for a combined budget through another special committee was rejected. As adopted, and including provision for a general secretary for the Committee on Stewardship, the Combined Budget for 1978 is

Christian Education	\$170,600
Foreign Missions	258,000
Home Missions	224,000

	\$652,600
Stewardship	32,400

Total Combined Budget	\$685,000

A judicial case, in which a minister found guilty of violating the Fourth Commandment in practice and doctrine had appealed both the verdict and the proposed censure of suspension from office, saw the assembly overwhelmingly uphold presbytery decisions.

A proposed new Form of Government, the product of twenty-nine years of study and discussion, was sent down to the presbyteries on a vote without audible dissent — much to the surprise of many. If two-thirds of the presbyteries adopt it and the next assembly approves it by a two-thirds vote, the new Form will be in effect.

The next General Assembly will be held at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, convening on Thursday, June 16, 1978, with a projected termination on Friday, June 24. Concurrently the synods or assemblies of the five NAPARC churches will meet on the campus at the invitation of the Christian Reformed Church.

A full report of Assembly actions will be given in the next issue, along with news of other church synods or assemblies.

AA--

Cure or Crutch?

William W. Goins

This is written in the hope that it might help the Christian who may be an alcoholic, that he may examine his alcoholism knowing that Jesus alone is his strength.

It is also written for the non-Christian who is an alcoholic, that he may better understand what assails him and come to see his only hope in Christ.

It is written for the minister who may have to deal with members of the congregation enslaved by alcohol.

Finally, it is written for the families affected by an alcoholic member, that they may better understand the problem—and the cure in the Savior.

What is "AA"?

"AA" is the abbreviation for "Alcoholics Anonymous." AA is defined by its motto or creed: "Alcoholics Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength and hope with each other, that they may solve their common problem, and help others to recover from alcoholism. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking. There are no dues or fees for AA membership; we are self-supporting through our own contributions. AA is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics or institution; does not wish to engage in any controversy; neither endorses nor opposes any causes. Our primary purpose is to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety."

According to AA, the alcoholic must

go through twelve steps in order to achieve and maintain sobriety, these being felt by the founders to be effective. It is my intention to examine three of these steps in the light of Scripture and to see if Scripture's teachings are included. I seriously doubt this is true in the AA.

My concern stems from the fact that I did share in this problem of alcoholism. More, since I am now a Christian, I feel a burden to share with those who will hear some of the truths of salvation and deliverance through Jesus Christ. The message of Christ can be of great benefit to many who now attend the meetings of AA hoping to overcome their problem.

The belief of many AA members, and one stressed in the program, is: "Once an alcoholic, always an alcoholic." Strange, but in our society a person found guilty of crime is considered a convict while serving his sentence, but becomes an ex-convict when he is released. But a person who has attained sobriety continues to be forever dependent on AA meetings to maintain it. There is a need for something more!

The Bible certainly knows of people with "drinking problems." But it does not refer to them as alcoholics; it calls them drunkards! To call a person an "alcoholic" rather than a "drunkard" seems to suggest that he is suffering from an illness rather than being involved in sin. But I will use the term "alcoholic" here since it is in common use, though to me the meanings of both terms are the same.

What does the Bible say about "alcoholics"? "Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God" (I Corinthians 6:10, 11). "Such were some of you. . . ." The former thief is no longer a thief. And the former drunkard is no longer a drunkard. They have repented and their sins have been forgiven; they have believed in Christ and they have been made new.

Step 1: Admit powerlessness

"We admitted we were powerless over

alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable. . . ." This is the first step in the AA program—and it is a big step toward sobriety. It is to say, "I am weak—so weak in fact that I'm dominated by a liquid, alcohol."

Now it was hard for me to admit this to myself, for alcohol and other sins did have control in my life. It was even harder to admit to anyone else. There were times when I knew that alcohol had control, but I always tried to push the truth back beneath the surface. It was not that I couldn't face the reality, for the reality was clearly there. The real truth was that I was not willing to give up the self, the old ego, and that I would not see that alcohol had become for me a sin.

"Alcoholism" is defined as "continued excessive or compulsive use of alcoholic drinks." It is said by some to be an illness—though it baffles many doctors. But I call it a sin if it has become the dominant thing in your life. I'm not being fanatic about it; I agree that over-indulgence in alcohol does cause illness. But I must call a spade a spade.

The Bible says nothing about a drunkard being ill, or drunkenness being a disease. It does say emphatically that drunkenness will keep one from entering the kingdom of God. As I said, abuse of alcohol does cause illness, serious illness, mental, physical, and spiritual. Excessive abuse can cause physical death. It can also cause spiritual death. To be spiritually dead is to be separated from God—not a pleasant state to be in.

Sin, for the alcoholic

The problem of the alcoholic is that he can't control alcohol, it controls him. It causes him grief; it causes him to do what is ungodly. For the alcoholic, to drink is to sin. But his problem is really no dif-

*I call alcoholism a sin
if it has become the
dominant thing in your life.*

ferent from any other sin problem.

The person who can't get enough sweets eats to excess, undermining his health — and that is sin. The compulsive gambler will neglect his family as well as his personal welfare — and that is sin. The person enslaved by the sensual or sexual is clearly involved in sin. The power-hungry in politics or business will trample on those in his way — and that is sin.

There is a pattern here. The one under bondage to sin, no matter what the sin, finds it hard to break the habits that dominate his life. The natural man will try to rationalize his sins, justify his actions. He'll blame his sinful acts on others — a "misunderstanding wife," an "uptight family," all those people who interfere in what is "my own life, my own business." Both the adulterer and the alcoholic are abusing their bodies, blinded to their sin, and defying God — and the habits are hard to break. For some the abuse may end in death; for others there comes an awareness of the problem and an often desperate search for a way out.

There is a "way out." But many people want a way that will somehow give them the feeling they have contributed something to it. The reason is simple — the "ego factor." But as long as a person seeks an escape from his sin — his "problem" — through his own contribution, however small, he is deluding himself.

The only way out of sin is in Jesus Christ who died for sinners. Let an alcoholic, an adulterer, or any other sinner, place his sins at the feet of Jesus and cling to the only Savior from sin. Not only is Christ the only hope for the sins of the past, he is the only "cure" for the future.

Step 2: Believe a greater power

The AA member is next told that he must "come to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity."

Now one thing sin does is to keep the sinner apart from God. Unless God in his overpowering grace and mercy makes one aware of the sin in his life and creates in him the desire to turn from the sin and draw near to God, the sinner would continue blindly in sin forever. Every person's time is in God's hands.

It seems to me that after "Step 1," admitting that alcohol has control, the alco-

holic immediately should have cried for help. AA is right in speaking of a "greater power" that can help. But the awareness of this power does not come from deep meditation, or some inner resource, or even from the AA group itself. The only "power" that is really great enough is God himself. And "restoration to sanity" comes only through Jesus Christ, who by his death and resurrection achieved full victory over sin, victory over spiritual death.

What does the Bible say to this? "Draw near to God and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded" (James 4:8). "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all men generously and without reproach, and it will be given him" (James 1:5, 6). "For we have not a high priest who cannot be moved with the feeling of our weaknesses, . . . Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:15, 16).

Now to ask God for anything means to pray for it. But if you're thinking, "I pray, but my prayers aren't answered," read again these words from Scripture. What is keeping you from God? Isn't it the abuse of alcohol that has brought you grief? Hasn't alcohol made you physically ill? Isn't the control of your life by alcohol a sin and a weakness? But you cannot receive help from God until you reject your sin — reject the alcohol that you've allowed to enslave you.

But all too often the alcoholic, though he may speak the words of a prayer to God for help, does not really want to be helped. No wonder his prayer is not being answered. "You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures" (James 4:3).

Anyone asking God for anything must carefully examine his motives. Let the alcoholic lay aside his agnosticism and humbly ask God to let his Word and promises of life flow into his life, to give it a new and different meaning. May God grant you the eyes to see his Word as truth and light, that it may give you hope in Jesus Christ the Savior.

And let not the alcoholic think that his "problem" is too great for God. Alcohol cannot put you so far down that God cannot pick you up in his loving arms.

*Not only is Christ the hope
for the sins of the past,
he is the "cure" for the future.*

You must repent of the sin, the sin of giving yourself to something that is not God. You must seek forgiveness in Christ and help from the Savior and Lord over everything. And as God does give help and strength, you must live to do his will and not your own.

God is the absolute power

"In the beginning, God created. . . ." And from Genesis on, the Bible plainly says that God alone has supreme and absolute power, the "greater power" needed by the sinner enslaved by his sin.

For the alcoholic who is now aware that there is something wrong in his drinking, let me say that he didn't just happen to reach that conclusion after years of drink and muddying up his mind. I feel that God has made him aware of this. But does he give thanks to God for allowing him to understand this?

Sin causes man's heart to become hardened toward God and it leads man to hold on to his image of self. He supposes that his own reasoning brought this understanding. With that delusion, he will hardly know where to look for the "greater power" he really needs.

So, because alcohol has become his master, it tries to and can keep a person blind to the truth. As long as alcohol is in control, even though the person understands that something is wrong, the alcohol stands a very good chance of maintaining complete control. Why does AA place so much stress on never taking that first drink? And why does AA insist that "once an alcoholic, always an alcoholic"?

True, in many cases this is an effective deterrent. Even so, this approach does give the alcoholic a two-fold problem: (1) It focuses his consciousness inward, to self. It is in his own strength that he must refuse that "first drink." (2) Because it focuses on his inward self, it causes him

(Continued on page 12.)

HOMO-SEXUALITY:

a dilemma in today's evangelical church

Robert A. Case, II

In the first portion of this two-part article, Mr. Case noted the three commonly held views explaining homosexuality: the oldest that saw it as a physiological or glandular problem, the Freudian or psychological explanation, and the more recent approach explaining it as due to sociological influences. He then went on to review Scripture teaching that clearly sees homosexuality as a sin-related problem.

AN EVANGELICAL PROPOSAL

In coming to a biblical view of homosexuality, one must begin with creation. It is here that the framework for considering this abnormality is given.

"And God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them" (Genesis 1:27; cf. Genesis 5:2). Both "male" and "female" in the Hebrew are used exclusively to denote specifically either the male sex or the female sex. Wherever these words are used the sex of the person plays a prominent role in the context.

Genesis 2:18 then becomes a key passage: "Then the Lord God said, 'It is not good for the man to be alone; I will

make him a helper corresponding to him.'" And this "helper" of course was a woman and not a man (verse 22)! Adam's response to this creation was delight: "At last! Bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh. This one shall be called 'woman' because she was taken out of man." Again we have a clear delineation between the function, creation, and name of the male and female.

God's own reaction to this fundamental distinction is that "God saw *all* that he had made, and behold, it was *very good*" (Genesis 1:31). And Christ quotes with approval and authority Genesis 1:27 and 5:2 (in Matthew 19:4) as the beginning point in a discussion concerning divinely approved marriages.

What should the Christian's attitude be towards this created difference? "Everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected, if it is received with gratitude; for it is sanctified by means of the Word of God and prayer" (1 Timothy 4:4, 5). This bisexual nature of humanity is a created difference approved by God and sanctified by his Word and through our prayers. Our duty is to live within our identity (as male or female) and to rejoice in that individual distinction that is ours in the common humanity of mankind, for this is the will and law of God. To do otherwise is unlawful (1 John 3:4) and rebellious (1 Timothy 1:9) and to change the divine order of creation (Romans 1:26, 27).

Men and women only know themselves in relation to the other sex. Homosexuality is a rejection of our creatureliness and is therefore idolatry. That is, the other partner in the created order, who is co-humanity and created in God's image, is exchanged for an image of one's self in homosexual practice. Not only is it idolatry because it is self-deification, but it is idolatry because it denies God's created distinctives and identity in favor of a "third sex" having characteristics of both male and female and yet not being a "helper" to either.

In 1 Corinthians 11:11 we read, "However, in the Lord, neither is woman without man, nor is man without woman" (cf. 1 Cor. 7:2). It is clear that Scripture condemns homosexual practice because it is idolatrous and lawless and a manifestation of the ethical chaos to which a rebellious judgment leads. Having said all this, what is to be the biblical response

to homosexual practice?

Need for precision

First, the evangelical church must use precision in describing homosexuality. It is clear from studies made that there are no easy categories in which to group people. There is the overt homosexual who practices his or her sexual "inversion" as often as possible. There is the latent homosexual who has inverted sexual impulses but refuses to practice homosexuality. There is the basically heterosexual person who, while growing up, had homosexual experience but remained heterosexual. The normal heterosexual may also show deep and affectionate concern toward others of the same sex and need not be impugned for so doing (1 Samuel 18:1-4; 20:17; 2 Samuel 1:26; 1 Corinthians 16:20; Acts 20:37).

It is vital for the church to understand the complexity of homosexuality. Just to have homosexual impulses due to early, perhaps subconscious, reactions to one's upbringing is quite different from having an active inverted sexual life due to disdain for God's created order. Klaus Bockmühl, writing in *Christianity Today* (February 16, 1973), says that "an early childhood homosexual fixation relieves the homosexual of accountability for his homosexual propensities, but it cannot relieve him of responsibility for his homosexual acts."

None of this is to say that the homosexual is not accountable to God for any lusting after persons of the same sex just as every heterosexual is accountable for such lust toward those of the opposite sex. (See Matthew 5:21-28.) But it is to say that *once a practicing homosexual does not mean always a practicing homosexual*; Paul plainly states that some of the Corinthian Christians are substantially healed homosexuals (1 Cor. 6:11).

In other words, the church must realize that there is hope for *every practicing*

The church must realize that there is hope for every practicing homosexual.

homosexual just as there is hope for every drinking alcoholic. Once a homosexual begins to proceed back to the created order of sexual activities and desires (just like the alcoholic "on the wagon"), then the condition changes from one of sinfulness to one of a continuing need for support from the church.

Dealing with the homosexual

While no theory of the origin of homosexuality has yet been scientifically proven, it seems to me that a combination of the sociological and hamartiological (sin-related) approaches best fits the Scripture. I'm convinced that physiological inversion (the view that homosexuality has a physical cause) is not acceptable for a Bible-believing Christian. The psychological explanation does seem to answer some problems as long as the way is kept open for all homosexuals to change their sexual orientation. There is no indication in the Bible, however, that homosexuals are psychiatrically sick—unless one believes that adulterers, alcoholics, etc., are psychiatrically sick as well. So, if the homosexual is not physiopathic or psychopathic, then he or she has had a perverse social experience and has reacted to that experience sinfully and the church must deal with the invert at that level of sin.

The first social setting the church must deal with in the life of the homosexual is that of the family. If it's not a case of closing the barn door after the horse is gone, then there may be hope. In any case, the problem of homosexuality may often be a graphic demonstration of the Israelite lament, "The fathers eat sour grapes, but the children's teeth are set on edge" (Ezekiel 18:2; cf. Lamentations 5:7; Jeremiah 31:29; also Exodus 34:6-7). It is commonly agreed among psychiatrists and sociologists that a perverse or confused family life will turn a potential homosexual into a practicing homosexual in search of security or an identity.

Truly, Ephesians 6:1-4 and Colossians 3:18-21 are more profound than we sometimes realize. (For further preventive medicine against sexual disorientation see Ephesians 5:22-33; 1 Peter 3:1-7; 1 Corinthians 7.) The church must preach and teach the biblical concept of the family to safeguard its members from homosexuality and to provide a climate where homosexuals coming into the church

will be given an understanding of their condition.

The homosexual in the church

The second social setting with which the church must deal is the local congregation of believers. Through a ministry of preaching and teaching and counselling, the congregation should be brought to a biblical understanding of homosexuality. That is, most homosexuals are inverted before they even understand what took place in their sexual orientation. But, *all* inverts can redirect their sexual desires if they want (1 Cor. 6:11; 10:13; Heb. 2:17-18; 4:15-16; 2 Peter 2:9).

Furthermore, just because someone once had a homosexual experience does not make him or her a homosexual. And finally, a substantially healed homosexual (like a substantially healed alcoholic) is as "natural" as any heterosexual even though he or she will always bear the scars of the deviation. Notwithstanding Paul's use of the past tense in 1 Corinthians 6:11 ("such *were* some of you"), once a homosexual always a homosexual (in the same sense that once an alcoholic always an alcoholic). The church should not withhold membership from a converted homosexual, but it must realize that with every sexually inverted convert the church is in for a time of exercising patience, love, understanding and discipline in order for God's will to be done in each homosexual's life.

It goes without saying that the church must not hold the converted homosexual in a state of suspicion (Philippians 4:8, 9). The church has the obligation and responsibility, as it extends the right hand of fellowship (Galatians 2:9)—and all that that gesture implies—to require a biblical attitude on the part of the homosexual. Bockmühl correctly states concerning the homosexual: "It is necessary for him/her to admit the sin in his/her past life, make confession, accept forgiveness, and begin to struggle against his/her past life, make confession, accept forgiveness, and begin to struggle against his/her impulses and for the cause of Christ, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, in the light of God's plan of salvation for the world" (*Christianity Today*, February 16, 1973).

So the church, when it admits a homosexual to membership, has the obligation to require a change of direction in the

There is a great deal of difference between a homosexual who flaunts his malady and one who resists it.

homosexual's sexual orientation. And the homosexual has the right to expect the congregation to labor with him or her in the fight to reconcile his physical impulses to the divine order of creation (Galatians 6:1-3; Ecclesiastes 4:9-10; Romans 15:1; 1 Thessalonians 5:14). The attitude of Paul in 2 Corinthians 2:4-11 must characterize the church if we are to deal effectively with homosexual Christians.

In society as a whole

The third social setting in which the church must deal is society at large. While the church always has spiritual obligations, no matter what the sphere, in the secular society its main task is one of political petition and preservation, not sanctification and edification.

Galatians 6:10 states the regulative principle for Christians in society: "So then, as we have the opportunity, let us do good to all men, and especially to those who are of the household of faith" (cf. Proverbs 3:27).

As the church views the practice of homosexuality in our society, we must be concerned for the legality of the whole matter. We have seen that the Bible clearly and unequivocally condemns the homosexual who practices his or her inversion. We have seen that there is a great deal of difference between a homosexual who flaunts his or her malady and one who resists the inverted sexual impulses. And it has been noted that just because someone once had a homosexual experience this does not make him or her a practicing invert.

Further, just because something is condemned as a sin in the Bible does not automatically make it a crime against society. "Sin can be committed by thought and word as well as by deed. A man sins against himself, his neighbor, or

Just because something is condemned as a sin in the Bible does not automatically make it a crime against society.

his God. There must be another with (or against) whom he sins before the sin becomes a crime" (Alfred Gross in "Strangers in Our Midst," *Public Affairs*, p. 162). What a person does that does not threaten or harm the common good of society should not be considered a crime (Romans 13:3, 4).

All this is to lay the groundwork for my belief that private homosexual acts between consenting adults could be legally sanctioned by the state. I see no legal or moral difference between allowing adults privately to engage in homosexual acts and allowing them privately to engage in adulterous acts or fornication or drunken bouts or lies or heresies or idolatries. (All of these are listed together in 1 Corinthians 6 and 1 Timothy 1; homosexuality is only one among these many.)

A Roman Catholic study committee put it this way: "It is not the business of the state to intervene in the purely private sphere but to act solely as the defender of the common good. Morally evil things so far as they do not affect the common good are not the concern of the human legislator."

While I believe that homosexual behavior between consenting adults in private could be considered no longer a criminal offense, I do believe that public displays of homosexual activity should be made a crime because they flaunt an unnatural sexual orientation before the majority who are not unnaturally oriented and the many who understand the damnable judgment due to practicing homosexuals. Basically it is a matter of public decency, morality, and tranquility that is to be maintained and gross public offensiveness to be curtailed.

This is little different from prohibiting intercourse between man and woman in the public park. I would hold that any public soliciting or accosting by a homosexual should be a criminal offense, as it is in heterosexual cases. In general, I would maintain that homosexual activity should be no more a criminal offense than debauched heterosexual activity, bearing in mind that the common good

of society, and not the freedom (i.e., rights; cf. Judges 17:6) of the individual, must be the starting point for the church's political approach to legal injunctions. The evangelical church should, therefore, support legislation that would give the homosexual equal rights in employment (non-pastoral), housing, and public accommodation.

Reorienting the individual

Finally, we come to the individual who is the homosexual. If he or she does not want to change in order to conform to God's created order, then all the church can do is to indicate with compassion, gentleness and firmness the biblical condemnation of homosexual acts.

But if the individual wants to change, then the church has several options in its approach to a meaningful ministry. First, it can counsel the homosexual to see if he or she might have the gift of singleness (1 Corinthians 7:7). It is quite possible that a converted homosexual might indeed be "assigned" by God to "walk in the manner" of singleness (verse 17). "And this I say for your own benefit; not to put a restraint upon you, but to promote what is seemly, and to secure undistracted devotion to the Lord" (verse 33).

If, however, an individual does not feel his or her calling is one of singleness, then I think the best help is a *small* group of heterosexuals (perhaps mixed with other homosexuals if there are any) to gather together for prayer, fellowship and edification (John 13:34, 35; Galatians 6:1-3; Romans 14:19). (A one-to-one relationship is just too risky and cruel for a converted homosexual.) This small group would or could act as Christian "encounter group" of a sort, with a trained Christian counsellor as its leader.

The evangelical church must-rethink its position on homosexuality if it is going to minister effectively (and biblically) to those oriented in that direction. But even more important than an "effective" ministry is the need accurately to portray the true biblical position concerning homosexuality and to demonstrate the wisdom, consistency, and love of God towards his creation, and especially to those who have repented of their sins no matter how gross their conduct once was.

This concludes a two-part article by the Rev. Mr. Case. He is a minister in the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod, and serves as the executive director of the Christian Action Council in Washington, D. C.

Jesus and THE SICK

Ransom Lewis Webster

The healing ministry of Jesus—one of the most obvious aspects of the earthly work of our Lord and possibly the most neglected in our Reformed pulpits. I myself never had preached a sermon on this subject when I considered doing a series of sermons on the life and ministry of the Son of God. Nor had I ever heard such a sermon by anyone else.

So I determined to prepare, not simply one sermon, but a whole series on the subject. And the result was a great blessing to me personally and to the congregation, for we were all reminded of many things—especially the tenderness and concern of our Lord for the everyday problems that plague mankind and his willingness not only to bring comfort but actual healing to those afflicted.

As I began I thought, "Suppose Jesus had not healed anyone. Suppose this whole area of his ministry were non-existent. Suppose he had simply carried on a teaching ministry, finally going to the cross to provide our atonement. If this had been so, a vital element of the work of Christ would have been missing."

In looking forward to the Savior's coming, the Old Testament had clearly anticipated his healing miracles. "Then the eyes of the blind will be opened, and the ears of the deaf will be unstopped. Then the lame will leap like a deer, and the tongue of the dumb will shout for joy" (Isaiah 25:5).

And when Jesus is challenged as to who he really is, he answers by pointing to his miracles and quoting from this

same portion of Isaiah: "Go and report . . . the things which you hear and see: the blind receive sight and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up" (Matthew 11:5, 6). He also says, when challenged another time, "But the witness which I have is . . . the *works* which the Father has given me to accomplish, [for] the very works that I do bear witness of me, that the Father has sent me" (John 5:36, my emphasis). In other words, the miracles of healing were necessary to help to identify him as the promised one.

The variety of healing

Just as the types of illnesses were varied, so the Savior's manner of dealing with them was varied. One time Jesus went with a father to the beside of his dead daughter (Matthew 9:18-25), but another time he stayed where he was, healing the person at a distance by simply uttering the word of healing from afar (Matthew 8:5-13). One time Jesus made a mixture of clay and spittle to use as a salve in restoring sight to a blind person (John 9:6), but another time he made no mixture, healing a blind person by his word alone (Mark 10:46-52). One time a person touched Jesus and was healed, another time he touched the person and healing followed (Matthew 8:3).

The power of his word

Everything Jesus challenged yielded to his word and was powerless before him. Nothing could contradict his will, whether it was the wind and the waves of a violent Galilean storm, the lesions of a leper's skin, or a terrifying demon in possession of a human being. Whether our Lord faced blind eyes or lifeless limbs, according to his direction all were restored to health and normalcy.

The power that Christ possessed was more than adequate for the work he encountered. He was able to do "exceedingly abundantly" in every case. No one went away partially cured. He was sufficient for every need, whether one leper came to him for healing or whether ten came to him all at the same time (Luke 17:12-14). Not only did Jesus heal "every kind of disease and every kind of sickness" (Matthew 4:23, em-

phasis mine), but he healed *all* who came to him (Matthew 12:15). He had power enough and to spare.

In his own authority

The healing miracles of Jesus were done in his own name, based upon his own authority. Addressing a deaf and mute boy, the Savior says, "You deaf and dumb spirit, I [and this "I" is stated twice in the Greek for emphasis] command you, come out of him and do not enter him again" (Mark 9:25). When he spoke to the dead body of a young man, he said, "Young man, I [on my own authority, that is] say to you, "Arise!" (Luke 7:14).

The healing work of Christ points us to him who is able to heal us, body and soul, for all eternity.

This point is further emphasized by the record found in the book of Acts of healings done by the apostles. Peter, speaking to a paralyzed man, says, "Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you; arise . . ." (Acts 9:34). These miracles were done in the name of and through the power of Jesus, who was the one anointed by the Father to perform such a ministry.

Healings always beneficial

None of the Savior's miracles of healing were judgmental; rather, they were always beneficial. Not once did Jesus ever use his power to strike at an enemy. When the scribes and Pharisees attacked him, he never smote them with leprosy, as Miriam was smitten when she attacked the authority of Moses. Elijah called down fire from heaven to destroy his enemies, but Jesus refused to allow or perform such an act, though the suggestion was made by his own disciples (Luke 9:54).

Our Lord had the power to strike Judas dead, to render Pilate speechless,

to make the Roman soldiers who crucified him lame and helpless—if he had so desired. But Jesus had come, not to destroy life, but to save it. His work was to release those in bondage, to open blind eyes to behold his wondrous works, and to loosen stammering tongues to sing his praises.

Now it is apparent that the ministry of our Lord was unique and unrepeatable. The cluster of miracles and healings surrounding the first coming of Christ and the establishing of the church is long past. Of course, God still heals his people of diseases, according to his sovereign will and purpose. And I believe it is right, in the face of physical illness, to ask of God his mercy for our healing. But the real issue is for us to see the record of the healing ministry of Christ, not so much for itself, but in his relationship to our Lord.

Certainly each healing had value in itself—ask, if it were possible, anyone whom Christ made well. But it had a greater value—that of bearing witness to the one who came, who in turn bore witness to the Father who sent him.

The source of all disease is sin. The true purpose of the coming of the Son of God into this world was to "destroy the works of the devil" (I John 3:8), which is sin and all its effects, and this he did on Calvary. He did not come simply and only to temporarily heal bodies that would eventually end in the grave anyway. He came rather to perform a work of redemption for the soul that would provide an eternal escape from the ravages of sin.

And he came also to render our sickly, crippled, and feeble bodies, in the day of resurrection, no longer susceptible to any of our present afflictions. The healing work of Christ while on earth points us to him, who is able to heal us, body and soul, through the grace of the gospel, for all eternity.

The Rev. Mr. Webster is pastor of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church of Omaha, Nebraska. Surely the miracles of our Lord deserve our attention and call us to fuller devotion to the great Physician of our souls and bodies.

HEALINGS

in the early Christian church

Richard A. Knodel, Jr.

There are many who, at first glance, can see no other option but to expect today's church to be a miracle-filled church. That is, they believe the church should have as part of its program and expectation the miraculous as seen in both healing and other supernatural gifts from God.

In the "longer ending" of Mark's gospel we read: "And these signs will accompany those who believe: in my name they will cast out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up serpents, and if they drink any deadly thing, it will not hurt them; they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover" (Mark 16:17-18).¹ Then in a context clearly miraculous, Jesus says: "Truly, truly, I say to you, He who believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I go to the Father" (John 14:12). As Paul lists the "variety of gifts" that are by the same Spirit, he notes that "to another gifts of healing [are given] . . . to another the working of miracles" (1

Cor. 12:9-10). And so in James: "Is any among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer of faith will save the sick man, and the Lord will raise him up" (James 5:14-15).

Such Scriptures would appear to end the discussion before it started. From many authors in many differing circumstances, the oracle of God would seem to argue that part of the program of Christ for the ordinary believer was the accomplishment of miracles. Healings seem to be especially significant, so much so that it appears as though God meant for the ravages of sin to be eliminated within the church.

If any pastor dared to impede such a program, he would seem to be at least rather careless and at most diabolical. But a word of caution should be sounded here. More than once in history a superficial reading of certain Scripture passages has led, by misinterpretation, to the serious errors held by many sects — all of which claim to take the Bible at its word.

The "long and short" of the present argument is this: If such Scriptures are indicative of the church's program, and if their central purpose is to manifest the redemptive healing power of God, then we should expect to see that demonstrated in the earliest history and teaching of the church. In fact, this history and teaching should go a long way to define and refine the exact role of healings and miracles in the program of the church.

A. Healings programmatic, but not central

This study was occasioned by a statement to the effect that "miracles (especially healings) were so significant to the work of the early church that there was hardly an instance of preaching the gospel in which there was not an accompanying occasion for miracles and healings." In other words, "healing" was tantamount to preaching, and both are part of the outworking of God's redemptive plan. So, we should find the same "co-relationship" between the two in today's church.

If this relationship could be established as an emphasis of early church history and doctrine, it would be significant. It would show that the later church had quite possibly relegated miracles and

healings to much too low a position.

But study of early church history and doctrine do not confirm this theory, but show instead that while miracles were part of the early church's experience, they fulfill a subsidiary or secondary role.

It is difficult to investigate this because there is such a variety of terms and phrases used to denote a preaching occasion. Even so, it is clear that there was much preaching with neither miracles or healings accompanying. Of the thirty-nine instances of preaching recorded in Acts, only four relate a healing to the immediate situation.² In two other instances, "speaking in tongues" accompanied preaching (Acts 2:4; 10:46; and perhaps also 19:6). In Acts 20:9ff., the healing seems merely circumstantial. In other mentions of miracles and healings, the relationship is not to preaching but to the individual who "worked" the miracle (e.g., Acts 4:29-30; 5:15-16; 6:8).

An author writes most frequently about what is his main subject. The overview above suggests that for Luke the central emphasis of the church's program was to fulfill the Great Commission to "go, . . . and make disciples, . . . teaching them to observe all that I commanded you." Or, as restated in Acts 1:8, "You shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth." It is obvious that Acts follows just this outline and that climactic events occur each time the church moves into a new frontier in Christ's gospel program (in Acts 2, 8, and 10).

The role of the miraculous, and specifically of healings, is more obvious for its infrequency than otherwise. When such things did occur, they were the mighty acts of God and significant in and of themselves. It appears, then, that gospel proclamation and teaching had a priority over such wonders, and while we should not belittle their significance, neither should miracles and healings be exaggerated in comparison with the

² Instances of preaching in Acts are listed; those with an asterisk were accompanied by a healing: Acts 2; 3:11*; 4:2; 5:21-26, 42; 8: 4, 5-12*, 25, 35, 40; 9:20, 27, 28; 10:36; 11:20, 24, 26; 13:5, 16-18, 44-48; 14:3*, 9*, 15, 21, 25; 15:35, 36; 16:6, 13; 17:3, 13, 18; 18:4, 5, 19; 20:9, 22; 28:23, 31.

¹ Most conservative scholars believe the "longer ending" is not part of the inspired text.

proclamation of the gospel.

B. Healings enlarged, but not universalized

Jesus prophesied that the one who believed in him would do even "greater works" than he had done (John 14:12). This has generally been understood to mean greater in number than in kind, since none of the miracles in Acts can eclipse those of Jesus. Because they possessed a twelve-fold advantage over Jesus, the apostles were able to cover more ground and do "greater works" than their Lord. A passage like Acts 5:15-16 shows the amazing ministry of healing that was done.

But just who is included in the fulfillment of this prophecy of Christ? It would seem that whoever "believes in me" was to have the power of miracles and healings. From such passages as 1 Corinthians 12, we might suppose that every church had members with such special gifts (see verses 9, 10). But the earliest history of the church would put this conclusion in question.

When the Samaritans "received the word" (Acts 8:14), which means the Spirit had converted their stony hearts, there were some of the more visible signs of the Spirit's work that were lacking. Only after Peter and John came up from Jerusalem did these new believers receive the Holy Spirit in the significant manner that had been lacking. Why, if "everybody" in the church was in touch with the miraculous (though differing in kinds of gifts), did they have to send to Jerusalem for the apostles' power?

Then there was that miracle of healing of Dorcas, who lived in Joppa and was a part of the church there. There were many men and women in the area who were counted as "disciples" and "saints" of the Lord. Why did none of these people heal Dorcas when she became sick, or raise her from the dead afterwards — if such miracles were a major part of the church's program? But they had to send for Peter!

Nowhere in the whole record in Acts do we read of ordinary believers exercising such gifts. Healings seem totally restricted to the circle of apostles and their closest co-workers (e.g., the "Seven" of Acts 6, and only Stephen and Philip

among them). The ordinary members do not "lay hands" on people, nor do they ask or pray for such healing powers. (See Acts 5:12; 6:8; 8:6; 13, 18; 9:38; 13:3; 19:6.)

After weighing such facts carefully, we should conclude that some supposed implications of the "gift lists" in the New Testament have been misread. To interpret a list, such as found in 1 Corinthians 12, as though it applied to the local church only is careless. Certainly such churches didn't usually have an "apostle" in residence, yet this gift is listed (verse 29).

In other words, the lists were for the church universal, the whole body of Christ. The data presented above suggests that few churches had individuals present who were apt at miracle workings and healings. These gifts were the possession of the apostles and their immediate co-workers.

C. Healings specific, not generalized

Many today feel that the church has a general mandate to heal, and that those who are healed are those with "enough" faith to be healed. The scope of such healing is broadly generalized to include "all diseases" and "all persons" as proper objects of such healing. It is like an offer of free ice cream; anyone who "believes" the offer is genuine and asks for it will then receive it — if he "really believed" it.

In John's gospel particularly there is a thoroughly worked out theology concerning such things. Both Jesus' main mission of redemption through the cross and his specific missions of miraculous mercy are called "works." Jesus said, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me, and to accomplish his work" (John 4:34). He speaks of his miracles as "works which the Father has granted me to accomplish" (John 5:36). Jesus involves his disciples in the same program when he states, "We must work the works of him who sent me, while it is day . . ." (John 9:4). These passages form the context for the prophecy of "greater works than these" in John 14.

What is significant is that Jesus is not going about an indefinite mission of works, of miracle healings in general, or of redemption in general. His works

Nowhere in Acts do we read of ordinary believers working miracles.

were ordained from the foundation of the world; they are the works of the Father, in accord with a specific program given to Christ to accomplish. A mere need for a miraculous supply of food or a miraculous healing of sickness is not grounds in and of itself for the Messiah's attention. And Jesus notes that Elijah went only to the widow of Zarephath and Elisha cleansed only Naaman the Syrian. It is only the specific program of the Father that is being carried out.

In other words, it was necessary for Jesus to know the exact scope of his mission, to know "the will of the Father" so that he could do it. Jesus knew precisely who was going to be healed during his earthly ministry. So also he knew every single soul for whom he died on the cross. When Jesus healed someone, and when he offered up his life, it was precisely for those who had been included in the will of the Father.

So then, we may ask whether those who are to do "greater works" are to do works of a totally different kind? I think not. If the Son was bound to the sovereign and specific purpose of the Father, can the disciples of the Son be different? If the Son did only the works assigned to him by the Father, how brashly impudent it would be for the disciples to suppose their mandate was indeterminate, indefinite, and generalized.

When Peter and John meet the lame man at the temple (Acts 3:1ff.), there is no emotional buildup, no discussion of how much "faith" he needs to be healed. They simply look at him and command him to walk. Should we not conclude that they knew this healing was one of the works ordained of the Father? But who has this sort of direct knowledge of the Father's specific will today? And if anyone cares to presume to it, is he also

Jesus' miracles of healing were in accord with the specific will of the Father.

ready to match that 100% perfect cure rate recorded in Scripture?

D. Purpose of miracles, primarily attestation

If a thing has an identity, part of the identity is the *purpose* of the thing. To use a knife for a spoon or gasoline for water simply will not work. Everything God created has a purpose. And to use a thing, or a person, otherwise than God intended is contrary both to the laws of nature and of God.

Yet this is exactly the problem with the present-day "miracles" and "healings." If you ask why such "miracles" and "healings" take place, you will receive almost as many answers as answerers. Very few will take time to search the Scriptures to see what the mighty acts of God were intended to accomplish.

Jesus understood the purpose of his miracles, and so did many in Israel at that time. His works were to attest or witness to his own uniqueness and identity as the Father's representative. "The works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness to me" (John 10:25). "Even though you do not believe me, believe the works . . . If I am not doing the works of my father, then do not believe me" (John 10:37-38).

The works Jesus did were not "cheap" or easily counterfeited. "Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a man born blind" (John 9:32). These were the kinds of works that are indisputable! Even those who hated Jesus and desired to discredit him could not do so on the basis of the works he did. They had to admit he was doing the impossible (John 11:47-48). As Jesus said, "If I had not done works among them they would not be guilty of the sin of unbelief; but now they have seen and hated both me and my Father" (John 15:24).

These works were not an end in themselves. Their purpose was to enable people to recognize Jesus as God's true agent and a fit object for trust. "These are written that you may believe that

Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God" (John 20:31). Because of these works we know that both the life and the words of Jesus are fully worthy of our trust.

The periods in the Bible where miracles and healings are recorded were periods when God was speaking to his people. There have been four main periods: the Mosaic period (the first five books of the Bible), the Prophetic period (especially Elijah and Elisha), the Messianic period (Jesus' earthly ministry), and the Apostolic period (the further revelation of Jesus into the world).

During these periods God "attested" or "witnessed" to the authenticity of his prophets' words. Paul wrote, "I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me . . . by the power of signs and miracles, through the power of the Spirit" (Romans 15:18-19). "This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him, God also bearing witness with them, both by signs, wonders and various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will" (Hebrews 2:3-4). And finally, a verse so clear we doubt that anyone could miss it: "The things that mark an apostle — signs and wonders and miracles — were done among you with perseverance" (2 Corinthians 12:12).

The miracles of healing were not just to take sickness away. They were a sign that this will indeed be true in heaven. But their primary purpose was to attest to the "more sure word of prophecy" that came to the New Testament church.

It is an easy mistake that many make as they read their Bibles, this error of supposing that everything that happened to the leading characters should also happen to the ordinary believer. The mistake is to fail to realize that just because these men were leaders means that they were vessels of revelation to God's people. To presume that the gifts of those revelational offices continue with us is to misunderstand their place in God's purpose. It was their peculiar glory, and the purpose of their special gifts of miracles and healings, that the church of the Lord Jesus Christ was built "on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone" (Ephesians 2:20).

Mr. Knodel is pastor of the Church of the Living Word in Volant, Pennsylvania, and has written previously in these pages.

AA — cure or crutch?

(Continued from page 5.)

to feel continually condemned for being a little weaker than other people. (And paradoxically, this approach may well lead the person able to abstain at will to feel he's a little better!)

But again, the only thing that can really bring release from this slavery is Christ himself. "If therefore the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed" (John 8:36). The sinner who repents and believes in Jesus is washed as white as snow. His mind is freed from fear and he receives a strength, not of man, but from God. This kind of strength brings with it new and different directions for life that re-focus the consciousness away from self to God.

The power of sin is great. Mortal man has no chance of overcoming it on his own. Sin will use any method in its efforts to enslave and keep the slave enslaved. It even masquerades as truth and light at times. But the Bible warns that those who know not the Son of God know not the Father either. Only God can restore one to sanity, and only through Jesus is one able to come to the Father.

Step 3: Decision to change

The third step in the AA program reads: "Make a decision to turn our lives over to the care of God as we understand him."

This is just another example of man's ego at work. It is saying, "I made the decision to turn my life over to God." But the natural man, which is what we all are apart from Christ, does not know how to desire the things of God. He cannot understand the things given in God's Word. He cannot turn his life around.

God alone opens hearts and minds to understand. God alone can create a desire for good in the heart of man. It is God who generates an awareness of sin in our lives. And it is of God's grace that he ever does so.

No, it's not within the power of an alcoholic, or any other sinner, in his own strength, to turn his life over to God. All he can do — and even then he should see that it is by God's grace that he does it — is to ask God, in the name of Christ, to take his life and shape and mold it to God's own will. "Not my will, but Thine be done!"

God has the power. And God has made precious promises in his Word. Even the alcoholic can receive the mercy of forgiveness for his sin and find grace to help

in his urgent need. Only let him come for help through Christ Jesus, the great high priest and king to whom all power has been given in heaven and earth.

The AA meeting

Let us look at a typical AA meeting and at the same time explore the possible danger if one becomes dependent on the program and the meetings as a means of gaining freedom from his alcohol "problem."

Meetings are held wherever the local organization can find space, usually in schools or church recreation rooms; they are usually held at night. When the group meets there are usually refreshments paid for by the contributions of members.

After the members arrive, the chairman calls the meeting to order and the credo is read. Organization business may next be discussed. Then the podium is turned over to the speaker for the evening.

The speaker usually gives his first name only (retaining anonymity) and he is himself usually an alcoholic or a recovering alcoholic. He tells of his life as an alcoholic before coming to AA, and these stories are not very pretty. For those listening there is much to identify with; they all know where the speaker is "coming from." Everyone in the room has been down that same road.

The speaker will tell of the fears, the hatreds, the despair that alcoholic enslavement brings. You hear how utterly degrading it is — but then, so is all sin. You hear how totally it enslaves and the things the slave will do to quench his thirst. You may hear even of the black-outs of total oblivion that eventually come to the advanced alcoholic, when alcohol reigns totally supreme in his life. Many alcoholics, after a black-out, will think about and even attempt suicide.

Having reached the bottom, the speaker then tells of his first coming to AA. He tells of his skepticism about the organization. Then he tells of the attitude of the members he first came in contact with and how he felt a kind of comfort with them. This gave rise to the "sharing of a common problem," which let him feel free to talk openly without fear of being shamed. So one can see why the alcoholic can feel comfortable at AA meetings.

But there is a danger in this. That a person can talk of his problems with others has, I think, therapeutic value. But the question is, "Where do I go from here?" AA stresses the necessity of continuing to attend meetings. They seem to feel that otherwise the alcoholic will fail to stay away from drinking. As long as this attitude prevails, the meetings be-

come a crutch and even enslave in another way.

The alcoholic may achieve sobriety, and faithfully go to the meetings. He goes to listen to others tell their stories, relating to what he hears, feeling perhaps pity or self-pity, and even a feeling akin to elation as he hears of someone who's done some of the things that he has done. This appears to me like two warring parties who've buried the hatchet but carefully placed a marker on the spot they buried it.

What is the lasting value in all this? To go to the meeting is to go back and check the marker where the hatchet is buried. I say, Get rid of the marker, let the hatchet remain buried, and soon you'll forget where it is.

What is missing in all this is the understanding that Jesus Christ really can free you from enslavement. Apart from a recognition of Christ's power to save, the AA credo seems very superficial. For those with little or no spiritual knowledge, the AA meeting easily can become for them a kind of mutual self-pity and self-admiration club; self-pity through identifying with the speaker's tale of woe, and self-admiration for having achieved some measure of sobriety through human effort.

Blind leading the blind

Once there was a man who was blind. He was standing in a place where he knew not his surroundings, so he just stood, afraid to move. Then out of the awesome silence came a voice. He called out and there was an answer!

What joy he felt! Here was another human being. The blind man and the other man talked for what seemed like hours. Finally the blind man said, "Friend, I guess that by now you've noticed my plight. Would you be so kind as to lead me to a safe place that I may sit and rest?"

There is a long silence. Then the other man speaks. "My brother," he says, "how I wish I could do what you ask. But alas! I am also blind."

These two men have each other, they are not alone. They can talk and comfort one another. They can identify and relate to one another. They share in a common problem. But unless someone comes along that has sight, these two blind men could very well remain there and perish together. "A blind man cannot guide a blind man, can he? Will not they both fall into a pit?" (Luke 6:39).

Once after an AA meeting I questioned a long-time member about AA's silence on religion as a working policy. He told me that "there were many people who

simply weren't ready for that sort of thing, and that some might react in a very strong manner." I then asked him how he himself considered Jesus in his life and the man replied that Jesus was his Savior.

But Jesus says, "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do men light a lamp, and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand; and it gives light to all who are in the house" (Matthew 5:14, 15). We simply must make the message of salvation in Christ Jesus known to all who are enslaved by alcohol. This is what makes us a light in the world and we must shine forth brightly.

The person attending AA with little or no concept of Christ as the Savior could go to the meetings for the rest of his life and stay sober. He may improve his physical state 100 per cent. He may regain self-respect. He may work well in the program. He may learn to cope with what once seemed impossible. But unless he finds that his Redeemer lives and that salvation is only in Christ, and comes to God in repentance and faith, then for him AA is a crutch not a cure.

"Come to me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart; and you shall find rest for your souls" (Matthew 11:28, 29). This is the promise of the Savior, a promise to you who may be enslaved by the sin of alcoholism.

Jesus asks simply that you come to him. He is not a hard task-master, his yoke is easy and his burden is light. It surely is lighter than the mass of confusion you're now carrying, lighter than the fear you're living with of what will happen if you take that first drink. Trust in the Savior, and all your fears and anxieties will vanish. Repent in his name, ask forgiveness in his name, obey his commands; and through him and because of him you will be filled with so many good things that taking that drink will be the last thing on your mind.

And if the thought of taking that drink does enter your mind, simply ask yourself this question: "If I take that drink, will it honor my Savior? Will it proclaim him to others? Will it give glory and thanks to God for giving his Son that I might have life?" Ask these questions about all that you do and in Christ's strength you will overcome the sins of this life, even the sin of slavery to alcohol.

Mr. Goins is a member of the Mechanicsville Chapel (Orthodox Presbyterian) in Mechanicsville, Penna.

Genesis 2:22

Pay Thy Vows-- OR ELSE!?

Writer's Name Withheld

Do you acknowledge Jesus Christ as your sovereign Lord and do you promise, in reliance on the grace of God, to serve Him with all that is in you, to forsake the world, to mortify your old nature, and to lead a godly life?

I probably would have become a member of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church had it not been for the third of the church membership questions. I find that I cannot answer "Yes," for it would be a lie.

For I know that there will be times, many of them, when I will not rely on the grace of God. I know that I will not serve him with all that is in me. I rarely do anything with all that is in me, and sometimes it seems that all that is in me is sin.

I know that I must forsake the world, but it refuses to forsake me! How insidious its influence over me, how great its pressures upon me! And to mortify my old nature is something I can pray about and work on—but can I really promise its accomplishment? I want to lead a godly life, but how can I promise the church that I will? "Godly" does not describe my life—just ask my husband.

"When thou shalt vow a vow unto the Lord thy God, thou shalt not slack to pay it: for the Lord thy God will surely require it of thee; and it would be sin in thee [to fail to do it]. But if thou shalt forbear to vow, it shall be no sin in thee. That which is gone out of thy lips thou shalt keep and perform" (Deuteronomy 23:21-23).

I recall hearing it said that a church should not require of its members what Christ does not require of his children. Does Christ require promises from me before he will save me? Does he require

promises after he saves me?

I didn't promise God anything when he saved me. It just didn't happen that way. After I was saved, I believe that I did make some promises to the Lord, but stopped when I saw I was not keeping them—for very long.

I can make known to the church my desire to live a holy life and my intent to try to "follow after holiness"—but as to the attainment of these goals, it is not within my power to promise, as long as my old nature remains in me.

Are all Orthodox Presbyterians serving God with all that is in them, forsaking the world, and leading godly lives? If they were, wouldn't things be a lot different in our church? Can it be possible that we have a church full of promise-breakers?

If so, shouldn't we heed the words of Preacher: "Be not rash with thy mouth and let not thine heart be hasty to utter anything before God. . . . For God is in heaven and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few. . . . When thou vowest a vow before God, defer not to pay it; for he hath no pleasure in fools. . . . Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay" (Ecclesiastes 5:1-5).

The writer of this brief article speaks out of serious and conscientious concern—and deserves an equally serious answer.

Not vows, but TRUST AND OBEY

The Editor

No, all Orthodox Presbyterians are not serving God with all that is in them, forsaking the world and leading godly lives. At least this one can't make such a claim. Does that mean we have made a vow we can't possibly fulfill, a vow we never should have uttered in the first place, a promise the church never should have required of us?

No, the writer of the article has gotten

into a dilemma of her own making. For it's not a question of vows but of faith and obedience.

The Bible's warning about hasty vows has to do with promises to give some extra thing to the Lord or perform some extra service *beyond* those required of us anyway. The promise made in the third membership question is about things we are required to do because we belong to the Lord.

It's not a matter of choice. It is a matter of obedience to Jesus Christ the sovereign Lord. Especially is it a matter of obedience to him for those who have been saved by his mighty power and wonderful grace. It's not a matter of vowing but of obeying the clear word of the King.

But the problem for the writer above was the idea of promising to do something she did not believe it was possible for her to perform. Well, she is right. It is impossible—for her—to perform it. It is impossible for me or for anyone else acting in his or her own strength. But it is not impossible for God.

That is why the promise is made "in reliance on the grace of God." It's not a matter of reliance on yourself, even of reliance on yourself to be in continual reliance on God. In other words, it is a matter of faith, of believing that *God can be relied on*, of saying in faith, "Thy grace is sufficient."

All of that is not to say that any believer will succeed in this endeavor perfectly. He certainly will not, for Satan still tempts and the old nature is still with us though no longer in control. But it is God's strength that enables us to make the promise to obey. "I can do all things through him that strengtheneth me."

Can you make such a promise, even knowing you will fail from time to time? Yes, you can because it is required of you to do these things and it is God himself who is working in you to do and to will what is pleasing to him. To serve the Lord with all that is in you is to serve the Lord with the strength of the Lord who is himself within you.

God be praised I can make such a promise, not in my own determination or strength of character or zeal to perform, but in his almighty grace and power. I make such a promise "in re-

liance on the grace of God," knowing that he who has begun a good work in me—no matter how many times I turn from it—will bring it to perfection.

Not vows, but trust in the grace of God and obedience to his will. That is the point of that promise.

—John J. Mitchell

No Need of SPOIL

Mrs. Robert S. Kepple

The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil (Proverbs 31:11).

When I first became aware of this verse from Proverbs, I was a very young bride. At that time the verse spoke to me in terms of fidelity to marriage vows. As the years have gone by, twenty-five of them in fact, the implications of this simple phrase have broadened.

I had not been married long when the pastor's wife said to me, "You must realize that wherever you go you represent your husband. The way you dress and behave reflect not only on you but on the man whose name you have taken."

Could my husband's heart trust in me in the way I dressed before his friends and family? Was I in good taste, not a fashion plate, but not a refugee from the scrap barrel either? Was I modest but not dowdy? Did I respect his likes and dislikes as to styles and colors—to say nothing of miniskirts and pantsuits?

. . . And then came the children. Did I build Daddy up to them or make him a threat or even a little foolish? Were his decisions honored to the letter or did we hedge a bit when he would not notice?

How strongly the Holy Spirit brought these words to me in conviction—"no need of spoil." As I prayed for forgiveness, I prayed also that I might give wholehearted honesty to Dad before our children, that he might be able safely to trust me in this area of parental author-

ity with Dad as head of the home.

Trust in the trustworthy

One of the crucial problems in marriage, I am told, is money. Some women seem to have great talent in managing finances and others do not. I'm afraid that I belong to that latter group. The reason may be that there has never been a need for me to be the manager.

My father died when I was quite young. In the days before social security and widows' benefits, my mother managed our scanty finances so well that I never realized how poor we were. Mother had a full-time job, made clothes for my brother and me from hand-me-downs, and raised and canned much of our food supply.

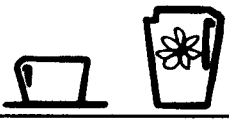
When I married, my husband took care of the finances. As did most of our generation, we started out with very little, but our expectations were also small. Before our children were born I often worked with my husband. This made me aware of how had he worked for the money he generously gave me for home and personal use. I knew that he trusted me to use it wisely, so I learned to pray before shopping and to hunt for bargains.

Trust, in love and loyalty

Have you ever attended a ladies' prayer group or Bible study meeting where one or more of those present aired publicly her husband's shortcomings? Surely this is betraying the trust of one, be he Christian or not, whom we have vowed to love and obey. How sharply it came to me that I had promised to love him, not to reform him, or to make him over into someone acceptable to me. Of course I pray for him, but I pray more that I shall be so filled with the Holy Spirit that it will overflow into our life together in blessing.

Isn't it wonderful, when you have been stupid or wrong or bad-tempered or so many negative things, to know that someone loves you anyway! That too is what it means, "the heart of her husband shall safely trust in her."

Proverbs continues: ". . . so that he shall have no need of spoil. She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life. Her husband is known in the gates, where he sitteth among the elders of the



land. A woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised." Does his heart safely trust in you? The God who commands also enables us to be that "good wife who is rather to be chosen than great riches."

Mrs. Kepple is a member of Covenant Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

ITEMS

San Jose, Calif.—Latest reports are that the Rev. Robert Sander is on the way to recovery after a serious bout with a form of leukemia of the type usually found in children. After many tests and prolonged study for a proper diagnosis, he is now responding to medication; he is up and around but not back to a full schedule. Your prayers for his continued progress are requested.

Schenectady, N. Y.—Calvary Orthodox Presbyterian Church is rejoicing in the ordination of Mr. Stuart R. Jones to service as associate pastor of the congregation, whose pastor of many years is the Rev. Raymond M. Meiners, who helped organize the church in 1938. Participants in the ordination included Mr. Meiners, the Rev. Lewis A. Ruff of Houlton, Maine; the Rev. Ronald E. Jenkins of Hamden, Conn.; and the Rev. Richard W. Tyson of Ballston Spa, N. Y.

Wanted: Vos materials

Minister seeks class notes, syllabi, sermons, personal letters, etc., from students of Prof. Geerhardus Vos of Princeton Theological Seminary. Contact: Rev. J. T. Dennison, 213 W. Vincent, Ligonier, PA 15658. (Note: A bibliography of Vos's work, prepared by Mr. Dennison, appeared in the Westminster Theological Journal recently.)

A Ministry in Memphis

Eastland Presbyterian Church (PCA) of Memphis, Tenn., desires to minister widely in the Mid-South area. Those moving to the area, or those temporarily in the area for medical or military reasons, are urged to contact the Rev. Robert L. Mabson (901-323-6578), or write to the church at 3741 Jackson Avenue, Memphis, TN 38108. Services are held each Sunday 11 a.m., 5:30 p.m., and Wednesday at 7 p.m.

The Presbyterian Guardian

7401 Old York Road
Philadelphia, Pa. 19126

Second Class Postage Paid
At Philadelphia, Pa.

News and Views



NPRF appoints director, plans 1979 Congress

The National Presbyterian and Reformed Fellowship has named the Rev. George Fuller as director of a 1979 Congress on the Reformed Faith which will feature 50 well-known speakers from a dozen denominations in three regional gatherings.

The congress is scheduled for the last three weeks of July 1979. The first week is at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, the second at Grove City College in Pennsylvania, and third at Covenant College on Lookout Mountain.

The purpose of the congress, in Dr. Fuller's words, is "to encourage unity among Reformed peoples as they think, anticipate and work together and make common statement of their Christian understanding of the Gospel and its relevancy." A major goal of the congress will be the production of a volume con-

taining the principal papers to be delivered on each of about 40 areas of concern.

Attendance from as many as 2000 congregations is expected and from eleven denominations. NPRF itself is a fellowship of individuals not churches and includes Reformed believers from both the more conservative denominations and those from the larger and generally more liberal bodies.

Dr. Fuller has served as a pastor and a professor. He is an advisor to the Presbyterian Lay Committee and to Presbyterians United for Biblical Concerns, both within the United Presbyterian Church. Readers interested in NPRF or the 1979 Congress may contact Dr. Fuller at P. O. Box 44, Valley Forge, PA 19481.

Jack White to new post at Geneva

The Rev. John H. White, Dean of Religious Services at Geneva College has just completed the Doctor of Ministry degree at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary. He has also had his duties at Geneva College enlarged to include direction of Geneva's contacts with the evangelical Christian community.

Geneva receives students from many evangelical churches, and Dr. White's task will be to establish liaison with these churches as well as to recruit both students and financial support for the college. (Dr. White is a member of the Board of Trustees of *The Presbyterian Guardian*.)

Reformed Seminary in France

The Reformed Seminary in Aix-en-Provence, now only in its third year, has grown from sixteen to fifty students. Growing pains have become acute in the need for space, both for living and for study. The seminary is planning to construct a new four-classroom building to meet the urgent need. The cost is estimated at \$260,000, a major undertaking for an institution with very little church

support in France. Yet it is felt that the move is necessary in view of the opportunities for biblically grounded evangelism both in France and the French-speaking world. Contact with the seminary may be made through the Huguenot Fellowship, P. O. Box 175, York, PA 17405.

Westminster graduates over ninety

The forty-eighth annual commencement of Westminster Theological Seminary saw more than ninety candidates receiving degrees, forty-one for the Master of Divinity (the basic degree for would-be ministers), twenty-eight for the Master of Arts in Religion (a two-year course similar to the M. Div. but without preaching courses), nineteen for the Master of Theology (an advanced degree), and six for the Doctor of Ministry, the first candidates to complete this new course designed for ministers seeking to enhance their gifts for ministerial service.

The commencement speaker was Kenneth L. Keyes, of The Keyes Company in Miami, a well-known Christian leader and a ruling elder in the Presbyterian Church in America. Mr. Keyes was a major figure in rallying other ruling elders to form the PCA. His talk on tithing is one that many audiences have heard and appreciated.

Meanwhile, Reformed Theological Seminary in Jackson, Mississippi, graduated nearly eighty and Covenant Theological Seminary in St. Louis also had a large class of graduates. These three conservative Presbyterian and Reformed institutions are turning out an ever-increasing number of well-prepared graduates for Christian service in the ministry and other fields. Already they have become a major influence in one denomination that had largely begun to slip toward a liberal or Barthian position. But where all of these trained Christian leaders are to find fields of service is becoming an acute question. The number of vacant posts available is quite limited and many will have to consider a "tent-making" ministry.