

—THEY WERE WILLING TO STAY WITH THE BIBLE—

# LESSONS FROM THE CHRISTIAN REFORM CHURCH

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***The liberals in our church are taking the rest of us downward with them. They tried in the Christian Reform Church also, but, in one area, signally failed.***

***This is the story. It has lessons for us, who claim to be superior to others in our obedience to the plain words of Scripture.***

The Christian Reformed Church (CRC) is similar to the Presbyterian Church United States of America (PCUSA). Both accept the “reformed” teachings of John Calvin; therefore both believe in predestination. But the PCUSA finds its roots in Scotland, Ireland, England, and Wales; whereas the CRC originated in the Netherlands.

In earlier centuries, both groups said they believed that the Bible is the infallible Word of God, and must be accepted as it reads. Eventually many descendants of these two groups immigrated to America. But, in the passing of time, both groups were influenced by the liberals among them to stray further and further from their original beliefs.

Who were those liberals? They are like the ones in our own ranks: half-converted worldlings, who bear the name of Christ, yet who view with sadness that their union with the church has in some respects separated them from the world.

Because they admire the world and secretly love it, they set to work to convert the church to the world.

Somehow they think that, if they

can have both the world and the church, they will take the spirit of both with them to heaven.

We can understand the problem; we have it in our own church. But sometimes we can see our own problems more clearly when we view them in another group.

Liberals want to take control. They want to run things. They have no qualms nor conscience about trying to take over. Satan has deceived them into imagining that it is their duty to “save” the church by linking it arm in arm with the world.

Working together in an organized fashion, they eventually become politically strong, devise a definite agenda for change, and set to work to implement it.

They work on leaders and influential laymen, and gradually turn the ship—the organization—into a new channel.

It is remarkable that these people are able to do this, since, as we see in our own ranks, they are generally in the minority—even in North America. (It was not many years ago, that a survey in North America showed that about three-fourths of Adventists were opposed to women’s ordination.)

Were it not for the fact that so many church members prefer to quietly follow rather than painfully resist the compromises, the liberals could not so easily take over our local churches.

The Protestant State Church in Holland had become so liberal by

the early 1800s, that faithful believers, anxious to remain true to their historic beliefs, split off in 1834. Because they were persecuted for their more primitive faith, many began journeying to America in the hope of finding freedom of religion.

In the 1860s, those immigrants formed themselves into a denomination, calling it the Christian Reformed Church (CRC).

But ere long, they began to forget the past. Although they had narrowly escaped the snares set by liberalism, eventually the half-converted within their own ranks began setting new snares.

Few people are as zealously determined as compromising, worldly Christians, when they set to work to defile the faith of the people.

The members and leaders of the CRC should have remembered the past, and the fall of their sister church, the Presbyterian Church U.S.A (PCUSA). Under the influence of such liberals, by the beginning of the 20th century, the PCUSA had begun to abandon faith in the accuracy and primacy of the Bible, and by 1967 had rejected it altogether.

In 1924, CRC liberals proposed that their joint assembly, the Synod (equivalent to our General Conference Session) should accept certain simple changes.

That is all; just a few changes. After all, they said, we are all brethren, and by accepting these modifications, we will increase our harmony, loyalty, and unity.

That sounded good; but, my

friend, unity is not worth having, at the cost of step-by-step apostasy!

Eventually, those few concessions led to more. But, as everyone soon learned,—it did not produce peace!

Controversies began arising, as the liberals pushed for still more changes (liberals have a way of never being satisfied with what they get), and conservatives began arising in disgust. Indeed, the faithful were ready to revolt, if necessary. Their beloved faith was being destroyed.

One crisis after the other developed over doctrinal beliefs. The liberals asked for acceptance of higher criticism, evolution, abortion, the feminization of God, ordination of women, and acceptance of homosexuals.

Because of liberal pressure, our denomination has already caved in on some of those points; the others will come.

As a result, church members began splitting off and forming separate small companies, while others just walked away entirely. Church membership continued to decline, and the funds dropped off.

The liberals seemed better at stirring up trouble and diluting beliefs than at providing compensatory financial support when the faithful began leaving.

What we are here briefly viewing in the CRC has been happening in other denominations; and, as we are sadly aware, it is occurring in our denomination also.

November 1992 was something of a landmark on the way to final apostasy. That year's meeting of the Synod decided to allow women to "expound the Word, and provide pastoral care." As a result, 4,000 members and 20 local congregations left the Christian Reformed Church.

All appeared to be lost. Few expected that the CRC could be saved. Indeed, one event which persuaded the Synod that it must placate the

liberals, was the declaration (that same year by a very liberal local church, the one in Grand Rapids, Michigan) that, if the forthcoming 1992 Synod did not approve of women pastors,—the Grand Rapids Church would mutiny—and do it anyway!

In open defiance, that congregation went ahead and approved a woman as a "Christian Reformed Church pastor" for their local church. As you know, identically the same procedure has been done at Sligo and La Sierra in our own denomination in 1995.

As the year 1993 dawned, the damage had already been done. The Synod—the highest human authority in the CRC—had approved women pastors.

The liberals were fueling up the steam engine for a complete takeover. Sure enough, when the 1993 Synod met, they were able to railroad through a decision that "all the offices in the Christian Reformed Church should be open to women."

This decision was in total disagreement with the plain words and principles laid down in Scripture. The conservatives knew it, and determined to make one last stand to regain their denomination.

Rallying their forces, they went to the 1994 Synod. For some reason, the 1992 and 1993 decisions required a constitutional change which would have to be approved at the 1994 Synod.

The outcome was not at all certain. If the liberals won, they would take the CRC into the same liberal quagmire that the Anglican-Episcopal Church and the Presbyterian Church had stumbled into.

Yet there was still the possibility that they might pull it back from that disaster, as the Lutheran Church-Missouri Convention and the Southern Baptists had so far done.

Prior to the 1994 meeting of the Synod, one local congregation (in Chino, California) wrote a docu-

ment and sent it to the congregations, appealing to them to remain with the Bible and their historic beliefs.

This statement, eventually published in a church paper (*The Outlook*), made this formal statement:

"When a denomination becomes disobedient to the Scripture, this action undermines the local church's main mission, which is to proclaim and live by the Word until Christ returns."—*Chino, California, Church Statement, published in The Outlook, March 1994.*

In addition, they said that the Synod's 1993 vote to approve women pastors and church leaders was not in harmony with Scripture, and was based on a dangerous method of Biblical interpretation. They said it set aside God's Word, and, by so doing, invalidated the total witness of the church to the world. It was taking Christianity out of Christians, because it had taken the Bible away from them.

The letter concluded:

"If we are asking our world to fully believe God's Word, the least we can do is to fully believe it ourselves."

Well, that takes our breath away. Those good folk do not have the wonderful blaze of light we have! They do not have the Sabbath truth, the Sanctuary message, or the Spirit of Prophecy.

Yet they are trying to save what Biblical light they do have; while we are letting our liberals change ours into shadows.

Their formal statement also included these sentences:

The decision "to allow women to serve as elders and ministers in the church is one major symptom of this [liberal] trend in the CRC, where the Word no longer functions authoritatively."

"The major problem, as we see it, is what this decision does to the Bible."

That surely does say it clearly, does it not? What is it that our liberals at Andrews, Loma Linda, the General Conference, and our other worldly centers of influence are try-

ing to take from us? That which the liberals are trying to take from us—is not merely our faith, but also our confidence in the Word of God! They tell us it can be interpreted one way or the other.

And that is exactly what the liberals told the delegates at Utrecht on Wednesday afternoon, July 5! They said we err to accept the words of the Bible as they read; instead we should accept general deductions which half-converted “Bible experts” offer us. Their interpretations should rule, not the plain words of Scripture.

But, now, back to the 1994 CRC Synod:

It met on June 14 at Calvin College, in Grand Rapids, Michigan, and the key question to be decided was whether to ratify the earlier decisions about “women’s rights”; i.e., should women be made church pastors and administrators? If so, then they could be ordained.

That issue dominated the meeting throughout most of the second week, and heated arguments were given by members on each side.

But, just as at Utrecht, when the arguments of both sides were distinctly seen,—it was clear that the conservatives had the Bible on their side, and the liberals only had theories about “justice,” “liberty,” and “equality.”

When the Synod vote was finally taken, to the surprise of everyone, the conservatives won by a narrow margin. The decision was not to ratify the earlier decisions regarding women, but, instead, to nullify them.

As of June 1, 1995, women could no longer serve as elders, evangelists, or ministers in the Christian Reformed Church, and all who had previously been appointed or ordained were to be released as of that date.

The action further declared that the ordination of women was con-

trary to Biblical teaching.

They agreed on a significant fact: In order to uphold the authority of the Bible, women would have to be denied ordination!

Is the authority of the Bible worth upholding? Think about it.

When people downgrade the authority of Scripture, are they not really downgrading the authority of God?

Cornelius Venema, a professor of doctrinal studies at Mid-America Reformed Seminary, wrote this in the following issue of *The Outlook*:

“I do not recall ever hearing a debate on this issue in which the two sides of the issue were as starkly contrasted, or the basic hermeneutical differences as obvious.

“The debate at this year’s synod did not obscure but clarified the extent of this difference in a striking way . . . The strength of the majority’s recommendations clearly rested on the Biblical grounds cited . . . Absent, however, from the argument of the minority was any sustained attempt to show the Biblical case for the ordination of women.”—*Cornelius P. Venema, The Outlook, July/August 1994.*

He went on to say that appeals by proponents of women’s ordination were made instead to “personal experiences and something vaguely termed the ‘thrust’ of the Scriptures.”

Sound familiar? These are exactly the type of arguments we are hearing from the liberals in our own midst. Our own worldlings tell us we are naive to take the words of Scripture literally. As though we were simpletons, they condescendingly instruct us that we should no longer use the “key text” method (taking a Bible verse for what it says). They tell us that was an erroneous system used a hundred years ago, which educated people today have discarded. Instead, we should accept modern 20th century “methods of interpretation.” By this they mean we should take their interpretations, instead of believing the

straight words of Inspiration.

At the 1994 CRC Synod, the tide turned, and conservatives once again gained control of their denomination. Whether or not it will last, we cannot yet know.

At the 1995 Utrecht Session, representatives from the world church rejected women’s ordination, but, unfortunately, did not rescind earlier decisions that women could be ordained as elders and carry out most of the functions of a minister.

It appears that our liberals are bolder than those in the Christian Reformed Church: As soon as the Utrecht Session was over, our liberals began ordaining women ministers anyway!

And church leaders remained silent, and let them do it!

Now those church leaders have declared that they agree with what the rebels did!

On the next page, you will read an official statement from the highest church leaders in the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists—that they support the concept of *ordained* women ministers (which the Utrecht delegates rejected). By this, our NAD union presidents go on record as joining the rebellion!

But there is more: They declare their intention to place women in the very highest levels of church authority! Not only are women to be the pastors of the men, but they are also to be their church leaders!

Is this Scriptural? No, it is not. Women have been called to the prophetic office; no question about that. But they have never been called to the priesthood.

Think back to the points brought up by the conservatives in the CRC after the dust settled:

They said that the arguments

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used by their liberals in defense of women's ordination—were totally opposed to Scripture.

When you stop to think about it, if we accepted the “principles of interpretation” advanced by Raoul Dederen at Utrecht, in favor of wo-

men's ordination;—we could apply those same “principles of interpretation” in defense of Sunday instead of the Bible Sabbath! (“The texts say the seventh day, but the principle just means one day out of seven.”)

When men, desperate to defend

modernist errors, stoop to explaining away basic Bible statements—they are ready to defend any type of error! Be afraid of them. Erelong they will go down and take others with them.

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There are nine union conferences in North America: North Pacific, Pacific, Mid-America, Southwestern, Lake, Southern, Columbia, and Atlantic.

The presidents of each of those nine unions, either voluntarily or through coercion, signed the following statement.

It is likely that this signing, done at the October 13 North American Division year-end meeting, was done in order to

maintain “unity” on liberal terms.

It is an interesting fact that half-converted church members always seek to impose a unity, based on compromise with the world.

The Christian Reformed Church won in their battle with the feminists; we are losing it.

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