

# The Outlook

**JAY ADAMS ON TRANSACTIONAL ANALYSIS  
GEERHARDUS VOS ON REPROBATION  
HENDRIKSEN ON INFALLIBILITY**



**JANUARY - 1978**

**DEVOTED TO THE EXPOSITION AND DEFENSE OF THE REFORMED FAITH**

# JAY ADAMS on TRANSACTIONAL ANALYSIS

JAY ADAMS

I have been asked by the editor of *THE OUTLOOK* to write something about Transactional Analysis (T.A. for short). I assume that this request was occasioned by concern over the inroads that this pagan system is making among Christian Churches. On that point let me say a word before I go on.

It is tragic to see how some Christians grab frantically at every new approach that comes down the pike. Among other things, this shows that those who do so are weak biblically and theologically (so that they do not know how to make a theological evaluation of the principles and precepts of a system like T.A.) or that they have learned to do exegesis and theology abstractly and do not know how to use the fruits of such studies in application to every day problems of living and in counseling (thus they eagerly search for some other system by which they hope to help others deal with life problems). Either way, it seems apparant that the acceptance of T.A. is a case in point, since in its origins and in its formulations it demonstrates hostility toward the Christian faith and constitutes an attack upon all the fundamental principles of authority. This is true of the writings of Eric Berne, its founder, and Claude Steiner and Tom Harris ("I'm OK - You're OK") his two best known disciples.

Since I do not have time for a full evaluation of T.A., I shall focus on two facts and let the reader judge for himself whether or not the system merits the Christian's attention. If he cares to do so, he may read further in the writings of the three men mentioned above to confirm the non-christian nature of their positions. Those two facts may be stated thus:

1. What the Bible says can be done only by the Spirit of God working through the ministry of His Word, T.A. attempts to do without either. It is therefore competitive in its relationship toward Christianity.
2. What the Bible says man needs as an authority structure for living, T.A. attacks and attempts to destroy. T.A. denies Christian truth.

If these two positions can be shown to be true, then T.A. in its goals, methods and principles constitutes a pagan substitute for the Christian faith.

First, before moving to a consideration of these two assertions, let us consider something of the background of T.A.

Jay Adams is Editor of *The Journal of Pastoral Practice* and author of *Competent to Counsel* and a number of other books dealing with Christian counselling.

Eric Berne, the founder of the movement, was a close friend of Erik Erikson, the neo-Freudian and was strongly influenced by him. Erikson, in contrast to Freud, emphasized the primacy of the *ego* over the *id*. Yet in most respects, he remained within the general Freudian camp. Berne reflects Erikson. However, he popularized this neo-Freudianism by repackaging it in new attractive wrappers. And, he gave it a new name - Transactional Analysis

Berne no longer spoke in formidable terms about Id, Ego and Surego. Rather, he renamed them Parent (superego), Adult (ego) and Child (id). These terms, it is apparant, made the product much more saleable. But change the coating if you will; the same bitter pill is within. Also Berne began to talk about "games people play," and "life Scripts," and used catchy titles ("Ain't it awful?") to these games and scripts.

Harris and Steiner have continued to popularize the viewpoint under such themes (Steiner wrote *Scripts People Live*; Harris, of course, wrote the best-seller *I'm OK - You're OK*.) Harris is much the greater popularizer of the three; it was he, not Berne (now dead) or Steiner, who spread the movement widely among the general public. Steiner still retains something of the stiffer, stuffier academic approach from which Berne never fully separated himself.

Now let us turn to the two sample objections that I have raised.

First, I have raised that T.A. is competitive to Christianity since it tries to achieve what Christianity alone can achieve - and without the Spirit or the Scriptures. Consider Harris' words:

"I believe Transactional Analysis may provide an answer to the predicament of man."<sup>1</sup>

Something of the messianic spirit of T.A. can be seen from this statement which, in its context, even more clearly indicates the fact. *Time Magazine* wrote:

"... Harris is convinced that only those who believe the 'truth' of transactional analysis can win the battle against neurosis."

They quote him as saying:

"You have to have absolute faith that T.A. is true; otherwise you'll lose."

As *Time* points out,

"The book itself goes so far as to suggest that it may be able to save man and civilization from extinction."<sup>2</sup>

And it is interesting that the way in which this "salvation" of mankind will take place is by individuals realizing "that the not-OK posture is an illusion."<sup>3</sup> That means, theologically speaking, that man's sinful nature can successfully be dealt with by denying it! Like traditional Freudianism, T.A. wants to deny the reality of the sinner's guilt before a holy God Whose law he has broken. T.A. approaches man's problem humanistically, denying the need for grace and salvation.

Clearly these observations show how T.A. is at odds with Biblical teaching.

"But why don't you think that God can reveal truth even through men and systems like this in common



grace? Isn't all truth God's truth?" One grows weary of such questions. By the theological gymnastics used in justifying T.A. and other counseling systems that are competitive to the Scriptures, the door is opened to proving atheism a good and useful system that we ought not to reject out of hand and from which we might learn a good bit and from which we might glean many helpful methods!

Of course God works in common grace! Certainly all truth is one. But what has that to do with T.A.? The issue is this:

1. Is T.A. truth (we may not assume so, thus begging the question); does it contain truth revealed by God's common grace, or is it a godless system set up to rival Christianity? That question will never be answered by *asserting* that it is God's truth. There is a way, however, by which to determine what God has given in His common grace—we may ask does T.A. square with the Bible?
2. We can be sure that God did not set up a system in common grace to do what He says can be done only by the Spirit working through the ministry of His Word. Common grace never *replaces* special grace. God is not a God of confusion, telling us one thing in the Scriptures and something different elsewhere.

All of us find much help in those truths that do come through God's common grace. However, the area with which we are dealing is not one in which we should expect the same sort of help that we receive in other areas of life. Human living is the area to which the *Bible* addresses itself. In the Scriptures—and in the Scriptures alone—can one discover how to love God and one's neighbor. And these selfsame Scriptures teach that such love begins and ends with Jesus Christ. Yet T.A. (and many other systems) say,

"Dogma is the enemy of truth and the enemy of persons."<sup>4</sup>

and

"Truth is not something which has been bound in a black book."<sup>5</sup>

Can we believe that this sort of thing is a blessing of God's common grace? Can a system based upon such views be integrated with Christianity as some think?

Certainly not! God has told us that He has given all things necessary for life and godliness in the Scriptures. Surely, generations of Christians before Berne and Harris were not wrong in believing so! Any addition to the Scriptures (not to speak of substitutions or rival views) therefore must be suspect.

We have been seeing how our second statement is true—T.A. attacks the authority structure God gave us for life by relativising truth. As a result, the Bible's teachings about the Church, the home, and the state are undermined. And, the authority God gave to each is eroded. In the end, the authority of God—the Source of all authority—is opposed. Authority demands a submission relationship (clearly taught in the Bible) but undercut by T.A.'s concept of the naughty

# THE OUTLOOK



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

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Parent whose authority must be rejected by the Adult. T.A. teaches:

"Truth is a growing body of data of what we observe to be true."

This bald statement in conjunction with Harris' rejection of divine truth in the "black book" leads to a subjectivism in which T.A. is found to be superior to the Bible! On this basis there is, of course, no final standard or authority but one's self. Indeed, this is what we are told:

"... When morality is encased in the structure of religion, it is essentially Parent. It is dated, frequently unexamined, and often contradictory... Parent morality... impedes the formulation of a universal ethic. The position I'm OK - You're OK is not possible if it hinges on your accepting what I believe."

In speaking of what he considers to be the true religious experience Harris wrote:

"I believe that what is emptied is the Parent."

From this brief survey (much more could be said) it should be evident that T.A. is incompatible with the Christian faith and that those who become involved in its tenets do so at great peril. ●

1. Harris, *I'm OK - You're OK*, p. 258.
2. *Time Magazine*, August 10, 1973, p. 45.
3. Alan C. Reuter, "Psychology and Theology: A Return to Dialog." *Concordia Theological Monthly*, Vol. XLIV, May 1973, No. 3.
4. *I'm OK - You're OK*, p. 260. T.A. dogma is excepted, of course! One must have "absolute faith that T.A. is true" *Time*, *op. cit.*
5. It is perfectly clear what book he has in mind. *Ibid.*, p. 265.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 265.
7. *Ibid.*, pp. 260, 261.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 268 Remember, the Parent is religion, authority, dogma, etc.

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## "Shall we Dance?"

LAURIE VANDEN HEUVEL

In this day of changing values and consequent spiritual decline and moral decay, the Christian often finds himself frustrated and discouraged by the world around him. But even more disheartening is the discovery of deterioration within one's own gates.

An examination of the *Acts of Synod*, CRC, 1977, gives cause for concern in several areas, but the one

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which engages our attention right now is the Report 2-A found on pages 214-224 and Article 64, II found on page 97 regarding social dancing at Calvin College.

The report presents opinions which the committee has garnered from students, professors, administrators and others, followed by a recommendation to the CRC Synod that "Calvin College adopt a policy statement which would allow for social dancing as an acceptable and wholesome, on-campus, recreational activity for Calvin students and staff."

A couple of reasons are given to justify this request. One is that Scripture does not forbid dancing. Another is that dancing provides the opportunity many young people need to be *participants* and not just *spectators* in an activity.

The committee furnishes a number of guidelines regarding the number of dances to be held, publicity, attendance, facilities, conduct, advisors, admission fee and music.

The committee envisions a few problems in carrying out the social dance program. 1) The music played at dances must be in keeping with Christian principles. This is a nebulous criteria particularly where music without words is involved. 2) Negative reaction from the constituency may present a problem.

But the real knob of the problem can be found on page 218, section D which says: "Social dancing in the minds of some people, carries too great a potential to evil for Christians participating in it. *The committee disagrees*" (italics mine). The truth is that the committee *disagrees* with those who find evil in dancing. Everything which follows in the Report, Attachment I and Attachment II, is a defense of the pro-social dancing position.

The committee concludes that since the Scripture does not forbid social dancing and even speaks with approval of dancing in religious, worshipful settings, therefore we ought to have the social dance.

In response to this we must say that there are many things which Scripture does not specifically forbid but which the church (many denominations) has warned against for years. As far as dancing in the Bible is concerned, one looks in *vain* for even one reference that might indicate a planned social dance with entertainment as its *goal* and close body contact between a man and a woman not joined by marriage, as the *means* of achieving that entertainment. The "dance" approved in Scripture is always found in a context of a spontaneous joyful response to an act of God. To use the Bible as a justification for the social dance is a mockery and I for one was shocked and dismayed at the enthusiastic endorsement of this grounds given by our Board of Trustees.

The committee also defends the social dance by saying that the potential for evil lies in the *heart* of man and not in the social dance. But what the committee completely fails to point out is that the heart of man becomes corrupt by *yielding* to the temptations of Satan and the social dance is one of those temptations which confronts man. Proverbs 6:27 says: "Can a man carry *fire* in his bosom and his clothes not be

burned? Can one walk upon hot coals and his feet not be scorched?" Who dares to deny that the bodily intimacy of the social dance combined with fast and furious music or low and seductive music presents temptation and arouses lust? One author has said, "If sexual stimulation were taken out of the dance for young and old, it would be no more interesting than tiddlywinks." In her column Ann Landers counseled a distressed young woman: "Steer clear of situations that can lead you to lose your restraint." Isn't it true that part of the excitement of dancing is the yielding (losing restraint) of self to another of the opposite sex? The social dance is the *soil* in which the seeds of lust germinate, often resulting in immorality, broken homes, hearts and lives. We pray earnestly for ourselves and our dear children, "Lead us not into temptation." Shall we now as a denomination deliberately walk into it? As goes our college, so go our high schools and churches.

A few years ago, I was stunned to hear that some Gereformeerde churches in the Netherlands were sponsoring dances for their young people in their own church facilities. The rationale was that this would present a more controlled atmosphere for their youth. After reading the *Acts of Synod, 1977*, and the endorsement and encouragement of the Board of Trustees printed in *The Banner*, I can see that unless the grass-roots constituency, consistories and laymen, put a stop to this decision, we are headed in the same direction as our sister church, in the Netherlands. Paul said, "*Flee temptation*" not "*flirt with it.*"

Already many parents of Christian high school students sponsor dances. They use the Christian school to distribute invitations and sell tickets. Many parents object in their hearts, but feel powerless against the pressures from their children who are in turn receiving a great deal of pressure from their classmates. "Brethren, this ought not so to be."

Any person who is not convinced that social dancing is wrong, cannot escape two other cardinal principles laid down in Holy Scripture: 1) Our Lord Jesus Christ says in Matthew 18:6: "whoever *causes one of these little ones* who believe in Me to stumble, it is better for him that a heavy millstone be hung around his neck, and that he be drowned in the depth of the sea" (also found in Luke 17:1 and 2). The apostle Paul says in Romans 14:21, "It is good not to eat meat or to drink wine, or to do anything by which your brother stumbles or is offended."

To cause another believer to stumble or to cause offence in the Christian community is a serious thing. There are many of us in the CRC community who will be deeply offended if Calvin College implements this decision. This alone is reason enough to reconsider and recall the decisions of 1977.

The Board of Trustees is waiting for reactions to be sent to it from the CRC constituency before its February meeting. This is my reaction, not only as a mother of five children. Please send yours — TODAY. ●

# gospel riches and church poverty

PETER DE JONG

## Introduction:

Although the subject of tonight's talk was left to my choice, it was suggested that the subjects of "Biblical Infallibility" or the "State of the Church" might be of special interest. With a view to these suggestions it seemed desirable to choose a more comprehensive subject which could in some measure take in both of them, but place them in a more meaningful framework than if either were discussed separately. I decided to outline a few observations about "Gospel Riches and Church Poverty." Under this subject we can consider the importance of the Bible and try to deal with present church problems in a constructive way. Let's think about the gospel heritage and then about what the church seems to be doing (or not doing) with it. And let's consider that gospel heritage under two sub-points: 1) A Biblical Revelation, and 2) A Real and Total Salvation.

## 1. A BIBLICAL REVELATION

The Bible often describes its revelation as a treasure of infinite value. The Lord once said (Matt. 13:44), "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a treasure hidden in a field; which a man found, and hid! and in his joy he goeth and selleth all that he hath and buyeth that field." This treasure is revealed and conveyed to us by means of the Bible.

## The Problem: What Shall I Believe?

I was driven to appreciate this Biblical character of God's revelation by a perhaps more difficult route than many are. Born in a Christian home and reared in a parsonage, I was educated in public schools until the second year in college. Of all of the teachers

A lecture given in the Calvin College Lectureship Council's Series at Calvin Seminary on November 10, 1977.



during those years in the "progressive (or Liberal), mostly California schools, I remember only one who gave indications of being an evangelical Christian. Growing up in a home and church which were trying to teach a Christian view of everything and in schools which were teaching an opposite, secular or non-Christian view plunges one into all kinds of problems. Teachers were not so much attacking the Christian faith as ignoring it as irrelevant. While I did not accept many of their ideas, I early picked up and assumed the underlying principle that an educated man accepts nothing without adequate proof—he accepts nothing on mere authority. Proceeding on this kind of assumption, one becomes adept at attacking and exploding all kinds of old prejudices and traditions, but is left with the nagging question, What (if anything) can one believe? Is there anything of which the educated man can be sure? The Christian home's and churches' answer is, "We must accept things by faith." But that leaves one with the question "Faith in what and why?" These were the questions that troubled and threatened my faith during those years. It is a striking fact that a half century later they are the questions that seem to be troubling, threatening and shaking the faith of many in our churches and of the churches themselves. The problems are easily stated but what are the answers?

Troubled by those questions more than some who have not had to deal with the problems of such a contradiction between a Christian home and church and a non- or anti-Christian school, I was driven back, as many others have been, to the Bible itself to find it answering more frankly and fully than any later Christian writers, those questions.

### **The Influence of Barth**

It may be of some interest that in the college years I was intrigued and influenced by Karl Barth whose writings were attacking the liberal rationalism so characteristic of what I had been taught at school. His *The Word of God and the Word of Man* rather effectively exposed the fallacies of liberal religious leaders who put in place of the Word of God only "the word of man written in big letters." (I remember arguing in something of Barth's way too against the rather uncritical traditionalism of Dr. James Daane and Dr. Harry Boer in the seminary days when we roomed together.) Although Barth attacked rather effectively the rationalism of Liberalism and spoke much of Revelation, it was also soon apparent that he (like many other thinkers) did not really escape from the problems of the movement he criticized. The reason for his failure in that respect was that he, in spite of all his talk of the Bible, still shared the Liberal critical approach to it.

### **The Bible's Answer**

For real answers one must go back to the Bible itself, which from first to last came with the claim of being God's revelation to men who were hopelessly lost without it.

The pagan world in endless variety demonstrated

that lostness, and God in the Old Testament revealed Himself to men who were lost without Him. He revealed Himself in His mighty actions; "He made known his ways unto Moses, His doings unto the children of Israel" (Psalm 103:7). But that revelation was not merely an act-revelation; it was also a revelation in words, to be spoken, taught, written, preserved in the Book of the Covenant (Deut. 17:18f; 28:58; Ex. 24:7; II Kings 23:2; 21). Living by the light of this revelation was to separate those who had it from the moral and spiritual darkness of those who did not (Deut. 18:9-19). Upon the coming of Christ and the New Testament age this revelation is completed and "fulfilled" but not fundamentally altered. One of the most fascinating passages which deals with our questions about revelation in the New Testament is found in the first two chapters of Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians. There we are taught that we are completely dependent on God's Self-revelation. "Seeing that in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom knew not God—and the centuries of man's intellectual history continue to document that—it was God's good pleasure through the foolishness of the preaching to save them that believe." This "foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men" (1:21, 25). He points out that it is really not surprising that we should be so dependent on self-revelation if we are really going to know other people! "Who among men knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of the man, which is in him? Even so the things of God none knoweth, save the Spirit of God. That Spirit, the Apostle said, he had received, "that we might know the things that were freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Spirit teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual words" (2:11-13).

And so God has seen fit to reveal Himself and His "Mind" to us by means not only of actions and influences, but by words—words received, spoken, written and passed along by people like ourselves, but inspired, preserved and used by His Spirit. These words of this Book, as the Apostle Paul wrote, in the growing confusion which he predicted, "are able to make . . . wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" because they are "inspired of God" (II Tim. 3:13-17). They are like "a lamp shining in a dark place," as the Apostle Peter wrote, because they are neither the result of nor subject to "private interpretation" so that anyone can make of them what he pleases, as false teachers would and do, but "men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit" (II Peter 1:19-2:3). That is the way the Lord's "divine power has granted unto us all things that pertain to life and godliness through the knowledge of Christ" (1:1-4).

### **The Historical Critical Fiasco**

Now we are being told that this view of the matter is much too naive for anyone educated in today's world to continue to hold. Scientific discoveries and historical and literary research have made

this old "childish" way of thinking about and believing the Bible no longer acceptable. (This reaction, by the way is not as new as most who share it usually think. Notice how Paul faced it among the Greeks (I Cor. 1 and 2) and Jesus met the same thing in the Sadducees (Mark 12:18-27) attributing it not to their assumed superior insights but rather to their ignorance of "the scriptures" and "the power of God.")

The continuing conflicts between scientific and historical theories and the "naive" view of a verbally inspired Bible press us to retreat from or modify this view of the Bible. Don't we have to "face facts," reckon also with "the human side of the Bible"? After all we are saved by faith in Christ not by faith in every word of the old Book. Can't we settle for just believing in its "message," consider its "authority" as restricted to "its content and purpose as saving revelation of God in Christ," as the formula of the 1972 Synod's notorious "Report 44" suggested? This suggestion appears as a tempting way to avoid a lot of problems and arguments. Unfortunately it creates more and greater difficulties. It raises the question of what in the Bible belongs to the authoritative "saving message" in distinction from what may be ignored or discarded. If the Bible itself is being subjected to this kind of critical study and judgment it cannot be the standard by which the judgment is made. Some other "canon" or standard by which to make that judgment must be found. A little book recently published in English, *The End of the Historical Critical Method*, by Gerhard Maier, traces the totally frustrating results of the 200 years efforts to find such a satisfactory "canon within the canon." J. I. Packer's little 1965 book *God Speaks to Man, Revelation and the Bible* (perhaps the best book I have found on this subject) calls attention to the fact that today's vast amount of study of the Bible has led the churches into total confusion about everything they should believe and do (a situation like that described in Amos 8:11f.). He shows how this condition is the result of the critical method of study which by "driving a wedge between revelation and the Bible," (1) produces a new hierarchy of scholars who determine what the Bible is supposed to be saying, (2) "raises a doubt about every . . . biblical passage," and (3) "destroys the reverent, receptive, self-distrusting attitude of approach to the Bible, without which it cannot be known to be 'God's Word written'" (pp. 11-13).

The increasingly total confusion about everything a Christian ought to believe and do (a confusion which is also increasing daily within our own churches), as these and other writers have ably pointed out, is the direct result of compromising and retreating from taking the Bible on its own claims and terms. God who went to the length of sending His Son to save us did not then consign us to this kind of total confusion about what it all meant and how we had to receive and experience this salvation. He chose to spell it out in words that defined and explained it in the same way that we communicate with one another.

That is what the Bible tells us. If we discard His instructions we are ourselves to blame for our resulting confusion.

### **The Bible as Covenant or "Contract"**

The fact that God clearly reveals Himself and His will to us in words is emphasized in the remarkable expression found so often throughout the Bible, "Covenant" or "Testament." Recently it has been suggested that God's revelation is "covenantal" or personal and relational rather than factual and capable of being defined in words. "Covenant" does indeed express a relationship, but it is not a vague and uncertain one; the word "Covenant" used both in and for the Bible (Old and New "Testament," are in Greek and Hebrew the same words generally translated by "covenant") expresses a relationship that is carefully defined by means of words or documents. Important relationships in business or society are among us carefully defined and expressed in words in the form of contracts or similar documents. That is the only way we can be certain of them. Paul in Galatians 3:15 compares God's covenant, with such contracts. "Brethren, I speak after the manner of men: Though it be but a man's covenant, yet when it hath been confirmed, no one maketh it void or addeth thereto." His argument is that if even men's contracts give that kind of defined assurance about details, much more can we depend upon the words of God's contract — and his subsequent argument is built on the difference between a singular and plural. I have often observed the way in which marriage licenses include a footnote warning against tampering with or misusing these legal documents that are so important to the family, sometimes even suggesting the penalty provided by law if the officiating preacher gets careless. It is significant that the Bible as God's Covenant to and with us concludes with the same kind of reminder and warning: "Blessed is he that keepeth the words of the prophecy of this book." "If any man shall add unto them God shall add unto him the plagues which are written in this book: and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the tree of life, and out of the holy city, which are written in this book" (Rev. 22:18, 19).

### **Problems Don't Justify Unbelief**

There are, as there have always been, problems in interpreting the Bible and questions which we, with our limited knowledge cannot answer. To use those problems and questions as arguments or excuses for denying the verbally defined character and authority which the Bible attributes to itself as God's Word, as is everywhere being done today, is to ask for and to get exactly the kind of judgment God's Word warned us would follow those who tamper with it. The Lord concludes His "sermon on the mount" with the prediction that whether our houses will stand or fall will depend upon whether or not they are built upon His words (Matt. 7:24-27; Luke 6:46-49).

(to be continued)



# WHAT WE Believe



(11)

REV. ELCO H. OOSTENDORP

## THE UNITY OF THE COVENANT

This is the eleventh in a series of articles on Reformed Doctrine, under the heading, *What We Believe*. The familiar question-and-answer method is being followed. Rev. Elco H. Oostendorp of Hudsonville, Michigan, deals with "The Fall" in this article.

### How many Covenants of Grace are there?

This is a very natural question in view of the fact that we speak of the Old and New Testaments, or covenants. Because the Greek word used in the New Testament for covenant, *diatheke*, can also mean will or testament, through the Vulgate's Latin translation the two parts of the Bible have come to be known as *testaments* rather than covenants. The designations "old" and "new" have Scriptural warrant. Jesus spoke of the Lord's Supper cup as the "blood of the new covenant." Hebrews quotes the prophecy of Jeremiah concerning a new covenant and emphasizes that the coming of Christ has ushered in that new covenant. Despite this reference to different covenants Reformed theology teaches there are different dispensations or forms of that covenant. This very important truth must be stressed especially over against Dispensationalism and Baptist teachings which ignore or deny the oneness of the covenant. In such a brief article as this it is, of course, impossible to cite all of the Bible's proof for this important truth, but we here want to confess that we believe it, and feel that it is vital to a true understanding of God's Word.

### Is the Covenant made with Abraham only for the Jews as his seed?

A basic teaching of Dispensationalism is that the Jews are still God's covenant people in a unique sense. Dispensationalists distinguish between Israel as Jehovah's wife and the Church as Christ's bride. They say that God has an *earthly* people who will come to their own especially in the Millennium, and a *heavenly* people, the believers who constitute the Church in the New Testament period. The Christian Reformed Church has judged that this is an unscriptural posi-

tion. In Galatians 3 Paul points out that Gentile believers are also children of Abraham and heirs of the promise through the Spirit. In Ephesians 2:11-22 he shows that the middle wall separating Jews and Gentiles has been broken down, and those who were once far off, strangers to the covenants of promise, have been brought near through the blood of Christ. In I Peter 2:9, 10 that apostle describes the church in terms used of Israel in the Old Testament. In J. B. Philips' paraphrase of this passage he inserts the words, "all the old titles of God's people now belong to you." In Christ there are no longer Jews and Gentiles, but all are one in Christ Jesus (Gal. 3:28).

### Wasn't the Covenant made with Israel at Mount Sinai a Covenant of works?

Because of the prominence of the law in its three aspects of moral law (Ten Commandments), ceremonial law and civil law, this may seem to be the case. There are in both O.T. and N.T., texts which contrast the old covenant and the new as law versus gospel and as works versus grace. Yet Paul also tells us in Galatians 3 that the law coming four hundred thirty years after the promise to Abraham did not annul the promise. It was given as a custodian or "schoolmaster" until Christ came (vs. 17-29). This is also evident from the fact that while Paul often speaks of the law as opposite of the gospel he also teaches that "now apart from the law a righteousness of God hath been manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets" (Rom. 3:21). Jesus said, "Think not that I came to destroy the law or the prophets; I came not to destroy, but to fulfil" (Matt. 5:17). The unity of the covenant is well stated by the Heidelberg Catechism in Question and Answer 19: "How do you come to know this (that Jesus Christ is our Mediator)? The holy gospel tells me. God Himself began to reveal the gospel already in Paradise; later he proclaimed it by the holy patriarchs and prophets, and portrayed it by the sacrifices and other ceremonies of the law; finally, he fulfilled it through his own dear Son." The other side of this is seen in the place the same Catechism gives to the law, not only as our teacher of sin and misery (Q. & A. 3 and 4), but also as our rule for the life of gratitude (Q. & A. 91, 92 and 115).

### Are there stages in the revelation of the Covenant of Grace?

Yes, we cannot only speak of the Old Testament dispensation, which is marked by promise of the coming Christ, in distinction from the New Testament dispensation in which these promises are fulfilled, but there are periods in the Old Testament ages. From Adam to Abraham the covenant was not formally established and there was no sacrament; from Abraham to Moses it was formally established with one family and circumcision was the sacrament; from Moses to Christ the covenant had a national character with Israel, and the sacrament of Passover was added. During this period also there was special emphasis on the covenant with David (cf. Matthew 1:1). The full realization of the covenant blessings is still future,



as is beautifully described, for example, in Revelation 22:1-5.

### **With whom does God make His Covenant?**

As was indicated before, there is a sense in which the covenant is made with Christ as the second or last Adam in contrast to the covenant of works made with Adam in Eden. According to Genesis 17:7 God established His covenant with Abraham and his seed or offspring. Peter showed that this is still true when he said to his Jewish hearers on Pentecost, "For to you is the promise and to your children" (Acts 2:39), but he also added, "and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call unto him." The history of redemption in the Old Testament shows that not all of Abraham's children received the benefits of the covenant and worshipped Jehovah as their God. Ishmael was rejected in favor of Isaac, and of the sons of Isaac God chose Jacob and not Esau. This is the problem with which the apostle Paul struggles in Romans 9-11. He insists that God has not broken His covenant, but Israel did not obtain righteousness because they did not seek it by faith (Rom. 9:30-33). In Jeremiah 31:32 Jehovah says that Israel broke the covenant which He made with them when they came out of Egypt. On the basis of these and many other Scriptures we can conclude that there is a sense in which God makes His covenant with people who are not saved.

### **Does this mean that there are two Covenants, one outward and the other spiritual?**

Although there are different aspects to the covenant, as for example its national character with Israel, Reformed theologians insist that there is only one covenant of grace. However, in view of the fact that children of covenant parents, ever since the days of Abraham, have become covenant breakers, they distinguish between the covenant as a legal arrangement and the covenant as a communion of life. In the Reformed Churches there has been much debate about this matter, so much so that a Dutch minister wrote a book on *Een Eeuw Van Strijd Over Verbond en Doop* (A Century of Struggle about Covenant and Baptism). Over against the prevalent baptistic emphasis of our lands (Canada and U.S.A.) we need to emphasize the precious truths of God's covenant promise to parents and their children. But the fact that we are born into covenant relationship may never be taken as an excuse for not fulfilling our part. In Deuteronomy 29 the Lord speaks of the curse of the covenant that comes upon the covenant breaker. That chapter concludes with words we do well to remember: "The secret things belong unto Jehovah our God; but the things that are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever; that we may do all the words of this law" (vs. 29). ●

(Editor's note: A useful summary of this Bible doctrine is found in the little 23-page booklet by Calvin Knox Cummings, *The Covenant of Grace*, published by Great Commissions Publications, 7401 Old York Rd., Philadelphia, Pa. 19126 at 25¢ each.)

# Actualistic vs. Propositional Revelation

REV. JOHAN D. TANGELDER

In every age of the Church certain key issues have to be faced. One of the vital issues of our time is revelation. Archbishop William Temple quite accurately described the situation when he wrote: "The dominant problem of contemporary religious thought is the problem of revelation. Is there such a thing at all? If there is, what is its mode and form? Is it discoverable in all existing things or only in some? If in some, then in which? And by what principles are these selected as its vehicle? Where is it found? Or believed to be found? What is its authority?"<sup>1</sup>

The purpose of this article is to draw your attention to the fact that there are generally speaking two different views of revelation in the Church today. The difference is not merely academic. The two views have given rise to difference of opinion about doctrine, Christian conduct, church polity and so forth. The two different views may be described at (a) the actualized view of revelation and (b) the propositional view of revelation. It should be noted from the outset at these two views are a basic manifestation of the theological differences within the Church.

## 1. Actualistic Revelation

Many contemporary theologians argue that revelation is an act (hence actualistic) in which God reveals Himself to man. God gives Himself (not words or propositions) to us. Of course there are propositional statements, but they are not revealed truths. They are the result of man's reflection on and interpretation of what God has done in history. The Bible writers, using the language and thought form of their day, have given witness to their encounter with God. John Baillie expressed this view as follows: "All revelation is given, not in the form of directly communicated knowledge, but through events occurring in the historical experience of mankind, events which are apprehended by faith as the 'mighty acts' of God, and which therefore engender in the mind of man such reflective knowledge of God as it is given him to possess."<sup>2</sup>

This view of revelation has far reaching implications. Christian doctrines are changeable as they are drawn up by the church to express its present experience with God. Times do change; therefore the expression of the church changes. Scripture is not authoritative in itself. It cannot be as it is written by fallible and inadequate human writers. These authors give their testimonies of and reflection on their encounter with God. What is recorded as history in the Bible is not necessarily factual truth. The creation story "does not tell us about a first moment of time,

any more than the myth of the Fall tells us about a first human being.”<sup>23</sup>

The creation myth speaks only of God’s deeds. Every moment of time comes from the creative power of God. The virgin birth of Jesus Christ is a myth; a story in which the early church expressed to the contemporary world around it, its encounter with God in Jesus of Nazareth. Since revelation is actualized it has not been completed with the closing of the canon of Scripture. “Revelation keeps recurring continuously in the life of the Church as God acts here and now to reveal Himself to His people.”<sup>24</sup>

## 2. Propositional Revelation

Those who hold the view of propositional revelation believe that God has revealed to man not only a record of events, the mighty deeds of God, but also certain truths about Himself, the universe, Jesus of Nazareth and so forth. If there is an infinite-personal God, a Being apart from this world, why can’t He communicate to man in word and deed? Man as God’s image bearer thinks and speaks. Why shouldn’t God communicate verbally with man created in His own image?

The Old Testament prophets were called the “mouthpieces of God” (Ex. 4:10-16). Matthew 11:22 tells that truth is revealed about future judgment. In Scripture, God warns, instructs and says. The “thus says the Lord” is probably used more frequently to convey to us the idea of revelation than any other. God has not left us in the dark, but has given us in human words (or propositions) the true meaning of His mighty acts. The God who has spoken through the prophets cannot err. Therefore, those who maintain propositional revelation defend the verbal, inerrant, plenary inspiration of the Bible. Scripture is authoritative because it is God’s Word. As such it is unchanging in character and final. Christian doctrines are virtually unchangeable since they are not drawn up by the church to express its present experience with God, but are a “setting forth of what the Bible teaches.” Passage of time may bring improvements here and there, and even correction as Scriptures are better understood, but on the whole there is no change. Since God has revealed truths, the historic events in Scripture are factual. Adam and Eve were real human beings who lived in space and time. For the holder of propositional revelation, faith is not only an encounter and a living relationship with Jesus Christ, but also an assent to the truths revealed in Scripture.

This view of revelation does neither deny the complexity of Scripture nor suppress the human element of thought and style. The penman’s personal traits, the varied types of literary material Scripture contains, are recognized. Yet the writers are only the verbal medium of divine thought. As Dr. Robert L. Dabney pointedly remarked: “But to say that the propositions themselves were the result of the human writer’s education and opinions, is simply to say that he had no inspiration.”<sup>25</sup>

For historic Reformational theology, the Bible in its entirety is the Word of God. It gives us a message

that, when it is brought to bear on human life, can transform man totally. “Therefore if any man be in Christ, the apostle Paul says, “he is a new creature: old things are passed away behold, all things are become new” (II Cor. 5:17). The Bible, having God as its author, can be fully trusted. Only through a totally trustworthy Biblical revelation can we know who God is, what He has done for sinful man, and what the future will hold in store.

The two views on revelation are drastically different. The actualistic view is a serious deviation from the historic Christian faith. I agree with Dr. Francis Schaeffer when he writes: “Christianity and the new theology have no relationship except the use of a common terminology with different meanings.”<sup>26</sup>

1. *The Bible – The Living Word of Revelation*, ed. Merrill C. Tenney, p. 53.
2. *Maker of Heaven and Earth, A Study, of the Christian Doctrine of Creation* by Langdon Gilkey, p. 294.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 260.
4. Ed. Merrill C. Tenney, p. 55.
5. *Discussions: Evangelical and Theological*, Vol I, by Robert L. Dabney, p. 465.
6. *The God Who Is There*, by Francis Schaeffer, p. 98.

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# GEERHARDUS VOS on reprobation

## *The Biblical Importance of the Doctrine of Preterition*

REV. GEERHARDUS VOS, D.D.

This article from the *Presbyterian* of September 5, 1900 comes from B. B. Warfield’s Scrapbook through the courtesy of Dr. Roger Nicole of Gordon Conwell Seminary. The rather unfamiliar word “preterition” means according to Webster, “The Calvinistic doctrine that God passes over those not elect, leaving them to eternal death”; among us the more common word for this doctrine is “Reprobation.” It is this doctrine which Dr. H. Boer has attacked in a gravamen he brought to our last CRC Synod. The Synod, instead of defending the doctrine of the creeds as our Form of Subscription says that every officer of the church must do, has publicized the attack and opened the matter for discussion throughout the churches. Therefore the observations of Dr. Vos on this subject may be especially interesting and helpful at this time.

One of the gravest symptoms of the revision-movement in the Presbyterian Church of today consists in the absence of serious appeal to scriptural authority



for the changes of Confessional statement that are advocated. From the attitude assumed by many, one would be led to think that no longer the infallible Word of God, but public sentiment, the so-called Christian consciousness, has become the recognized rule of faith among us. Consequently there is reason to fear that the spirit in which revision is sought forebodes greater evil to the Church than any material modifications of the creed to which revision may lead. Even if the Calvinistic system of doctrine embodied in our Standards were seriously mutilated in result of the present movement, so long as the great body of believers feel themselves in conscience bound to yield unquestioning faith to the Bible, there is always hope for a rehabilitation of the principles temporarily abandoned. But, when once the sense of allegiance to the Word of God as the only authoritative rule of faith has become weakened, or, while still recognized in theory has ceased to be a living force in the minds of believers, then the hope of a return to the truth once forsaken is reduced to a minimum.

Among the elements of Calvinistic belief now under attack on account of the popular disfavor into which they have fallen, the doctrine of preterition occupies a conspicuous place. So far as we are aware it is seldom asserted openly, that this doctrine must go, because it has no basis in the Scripture. The worst that thoughtful and theologically informed minds venture to say against it is, that it represents but a logical inference from other truths, and that in such delicate matters the Church may well content itself with summarizing the direct utterances of the Word of God, leaving it to the science or theology to draw the further inferences from these primary data. Even such a statement, however, utterly fails to do justice to the biblical facts. It is true, that the Bible also teaches the principle of preterition, by way of implication, as a corollary of certain other fundamental doctrines. No more is necessary than to combine the two single truths, that all saving grace, inclusive of faith, is the supernatural gift of God, and that not all men are made recipients of this gift, to perceive immediately that the ultimate reason why some are saved and others passed by can lie in God alone. In so far every confession which adheres to these two primary facts — and no Calvinistic Confession could for a moment hesitate to do so — is also bound to imply the doctrine of preterition. But the Scriptures give us much more than indirect warrant for upholding the principle here at issue. In the first place it should be observed that the absoluteness with which the Bible subsumes all events under the sovereign decree of God extend to sinful developments as well as to the morally good activities of men, and that consequently the human unbelief of the Gospel which prevents the salvation of many, is as truly subject to a divine decree as the faith by which others are saved. No matter whether we call this decree an act of preterition, or give it some other name, the general Bible-doctrine on the all-comprehensiveness of the divine decree forces us to recognize it as a reality.

In the second place, the Scriptures speak in particular terms of that part of the divine decree, which has specific reference to the non-salvation of some, terms as strong and unequivocal as any that are used to describe the corresponding act which appoints men unto salvation. It is easy to be misled on this point by the scarcity of biblical statements representing the decree of preterition as an eternal act in the mind of God, especially within the limits of the Old Testament. But a moment's reflection will show that this applies equally much to the Old Testament doctrine of election. Both election and preterition are by preference viewed in the Old Testament as they emerge in the actual control of the issues of history. It is God acting in result of His eternal will, rather than willing in advance of His temporal act what this stage of revelation describes to us. Keeping this in mind, we perceive that preterition is as frequently and as emphatically spoken of as its counterpart, not only in national and collective relations, but also with reference to individuals, sometimes with so little attempt at guarding against possible misapprehensions that the appearance results as if the decree somehow were efficient cause of unbelief instead of merely permitting and controlling it for its own holy ends as it really does. In the New Testament, while the historical mode of viewing the decree as passing over into realization is not abandoned, the eternal background of the same, as it exists above all time, an ideal world in God, is more clearly revealed.

In the third place, the Bible still more pointedly calls attention to the necessary place which preterition occupies in the general decree of God pertaining to salvation, when it defines the act of predestination with eternal life, as is one of its fundamental aspects an elective act by which certain persons are singled out from among a greater number of individuals. The specific sense of both the Hebrew and Greek terms rendered by "election" results from the prominence they both give to the element of discrimination implied in the divine choice. While, therefore, predestination as the appointment to the goal of eternal salvation can be logically conceived without the correlate of preterition, it is different with the idea of election. This idea is of such a nature that it cannot even be completed in thought without positing at the same time the idea of preterition. For this reason it is an utterly futile endeavor to attempt to construe a formula which shall adequately reproduce the scriptural doctrine of election, and yet leave unexpressed the correlated doctrine of preterition. This becomes specially significant in view of the fact that the term "election" strongly preponderates over all others in the scriptural references to the decree of salvation. In a divine revelation where nothing is insignificant, there must be assumed to exist a special motive for the preference thus given to one among the many terms that stood at the Holy Spirit's disposal. In other words, if the Bible thinks it necessary to teach us not merely that Christians are predestined by free grace into eternal salvation, but also thinks it necessary persistently to remind us how this appointment

of some into life took place from among a number of others who were sovereignly passed by, then this can only mean that in the view of God the principle of preterition is essential to the expression of the most important aspect of the decree of salvation.

Nor does the Bible leave us in doubt as to why such great practical importance for our instruction is attached by God to the discriminating element in predestination. The motive is none other than to impress most profoundly upon the mind of believers the conviction of the absolutely gracious character of their redemption. No stronger way of bringing this out is conceivable than by showing in actual experience that under entirely equal conditions, as viewed from the human standpoint, one man is saved, another is left unsaved in his sin. To use the classical statement of the Apostle Paul on this very same problem: "For the children being not yet born, neither having done anything good or bad, that the elective purpose of God might stand, not of work, but of him that calleth, it was said unto her, the elder shall serve the younger." This is far from saying, that the motive here disclosed is the only that determines God in the mysterious act of election. There may be many other motives, all equally wise and holy, entering into his choice and which it has not pleased Him to reveal to our finite understanding. But this one motive He has made known to us, and thereby also indirectly taught us, that, whatever other reasons for His sovereign decree may exist, they can have nothing to do with anything meritorious possessed by one man above another. Thus the sole purport of the doctrine of preterition as presented to our faith in the Scriptures is the exaltation of the grace of God. Can a Church which professes pre-eminently to uphold the Gospel of free grace, refuse to echo this part of God's revelation in her Confession? And can it be safe for any Church to erase from her creed a mode of expressing the divine grace from her creed a mode of expressing the divine grace, which God Himself has used to instruct us, on the plea that she deems its use unpopular and inexpedient? Shall man be wiser than God? ●

### *Puget Sound Chapter Meets*

The annual meeting of the  
PUGET SOUND REFORMED FELLOWSHIP CHAPTER

will be held at the

**Lynwood Christian Reformed Church  
LYNWOOD, WASHINGTON**

**on January 24, 1978**

REV. THOMAS VANDEN HEUVEL, pastor of the  
First Christian Reformed Church of Chino,  
California, will be the guest speaker.

# Scripture's Infallibility Objections answered by William Hendriksen

The objections concern deviations from the Reformed position. These objections will be stated first; then, in each case, my answer.

## **Objection No. 1**

Since we know that in the process of copying and/or translating the autographa (= originals) errors were made, we can no longer speak of an "infallible" Bible.

## **Answer**

Nonsense! Whatever the holy authors wrote remains infallible. It is what God wanted it to be. See II Timothy 3:16, 17; II Peter 1:21. Does anyone seriously wish to maintain that the Word of God has lost its infallible character because a certain copyist, printer, proofreader, or translator erred? Let us not confuse the issue!

Moreover, instead of exaggerating the proportion of error in copying, etc. let us rather try to correct such mistakes. The *Word* is and remains infallible!

## **Objection No. 2**

When two Gospels tell the same story but on the surface seem to be in conflict on some point, we must not try to clarify such a seeming discrepancy. We must abstain from every attempt to harmonize. John Calvin (in his *Commentary on the Harmony of the Gospels*) has led us astray.

## **Answer**

To be sure, there is a danger here. Each account must be allowed to stand on its own feet. Nevertheless, is it not altogether reasonable that a serious student will tell himself, "Am I reading correctly? Are these accounts *really* in conflict? Let me take a second look."

A case in point is the *Temptation of Christ* narrative in Matthew 4:1-11 compared to that in Luke 4:1-13. There might seem to be a conflict, since Matthews 1, 2, 3 incidents are by Luke arranged in the order 1, 3, 2. However, as the very wording indicates, there is no real conflict at all. Matthew arranges these incidents *chronologically*; Luke relates them *topically*, an arrangement he adopts with great frequency throughout his Gospel. Besides, as I have shown in my N.T.C. (Commentary) on Luke, there may well be a reason why it is exactly Luke who places the "pinnacle of the temple" temptation last of all. Placing



it there is in line with the entire purpose and tenor of his Gospel.

Those who believe that the entire Bible is the Word of God will of course try to discover how the parallel accounts are related to each other. Do not let the WARNING AGAINST HARMONIZATION SCARE-CROW frighten you!

### Objection No. 3

The Bible is infallible when it discusses matters touching salvation, but not when it deals with matters of a different — for example, historical or geographical — nature.

#### Answer

So closely is the *doctrine* of Creation intertwined with the *story* of Creation, and the *doctrine* of the Resurrection with the *story* of the Resurrection, that separation between doctrinal and historical is entirely impossible! And the *doctrine* of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit is presented in a definitely *geographical* context. See Acts 2:5-13. The distinction drawn is an impossible one!

### Objection No. 4

The “holy authors” (Moses, Isaiah, Matthew, Luke, Paul, etc.) committed serious errors in their use of vocabulary and grammar.

#### Answer

Who, indeed, is that linguistic and stylistic genius who has such a phenomenal knowledge of all the languages which contributed to the vocabulary and grammar of the authors of Scripture that he is able to sit in judgment on such matters? To be sure, there are deviations from the normal, but it would be entirely wrong to call them *mistakes*. Mark’s grammar and vocabulary differs from that of Luke, but I would be the last one to speak of *errors* in this connection.

### Objections No. 5

It is clear that in such passages as *a.* Luke 23:43; II Cor.12:4; Rev. 2:7; also *b.* Rev. 12:9, 14, 15; 20:2; also *c.* Rev. 2:7; 22:2, 14; and also *d.* Rev. 22:1, 2 such terms as, respectively, *a.* “paradise,” *b.* “serpent,” *c.* “tree of life,” and *d.* “river” are used in a manner that can hardly be called strictly literal. Therefore we do not have to believe that in the Genesis 3 story these terms need to be interpreted literally. It cannot be proved that a snake ever actually said anything to Eve, nor can it be established that the other items in the Genesis 3 account must be taken literally.

#### Answer

This type of reasoning puts the cart before the horse. Literal use *precedes* symbolical use. Genesis 3 must be interpreted literally, historically. If not, why take Genesis 4 literally? If the FALL did not actually occur, what must we do with the references to it in the New Testament? Besides, if the FALL did not happen as recorded, can we be sure that REDEMPTION took place on Calvary, or that it was even necessary?

### Objection No. 6

Since the entire Bible is indeed the infallible Word of God, it must be interpreted literally throughout.

#### Answer

Newspaper articles have been reporting that newly-formed denominations have taken this stand. Let us hope that the reports were erroneous. For passages containing phrases that should not be taken literally, but were nevertheless erroneously so interpreted by those who first heard them, see Matthw 9:24; 16:5-12; John 2:19-21; 3:3, 4; 4:10-12; 6:48-52; 11:11-13. Whether or not a certain word, phrase, or passage must be interpreted literally or figuratively is made clear by a diligent study of the context in each case.

So after fifty years in the ministry, my advice is, “OUTLOOK continue to adhere to your present stand. You are doing fine. Keep it up. Let us tell the beautiful story. Let us remain thoroughly Reformed in its presentation. To God be all the glory.” ●

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reformed women speak

# a blessed hunger

KATIE GUNNINK

*Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness for they shall be filled.* Matt. 5:6.

This text begs for an answer to the following questions: What is hunger? What is righteousness? What does it mean to hunger and thirst after righteousness? How do I experience the satisfaction of being “filled”? What constitutes the blessedness in this hungering and thirsting?

First then, What is hunger? Most of us have never experienced real physical hunger; but think of people who have eaten the flesh of dead comrades to stay alive. Think of women who have eaten their own children. Hunger is painful. Hunger is craving for something we desperately need in order to live.

There are various kinds of hunger. There is a hunger for knowledge, some deprive themselves of physical comfort and even necessities to gain knowl-

*Miss Katie Gunnink, who plans to retire from teaching at the Reformed Bible College in 1978, gave this address at its opening convocation in the fall of 1977.*

edge. There is hunger for artistic or aesthetic expression. The artist Van Gogh voluntarily suffered many physical deprivations in order to express himself in his paintings. There is also a hunger for fellowship with friends and family. But the most basic, fundamental hunger of all is the hunger for righteousness.

What is righteousness? Righteousness is to be right with God; to be approved and accepted by God. This is precisely what we do not have. This is the supreme deprivation. We lack the righteousness that brings us into favor with God and without it we cannot live. It is the supreme need of our life.

That we lack this righteousness is clearly taught in the context of this verse. The first verse of the beatitudes clearly implies that we are spiritually bankrupt and destitute; we are vagabonds and prodigals deprived of a spiritual home and alienated from God.

But you say, "We do have righteousness. We are believers and have the righteousness of Jesus by faith. We are no longer deprived; so we need no longer hunger and thirst." But I do hunger and thirst still! How must we explain this continuing painful hunger?

There are, I believe, two closely related aspects to this hunger. The one is that although we have the righteousness of Jesus, we must still be continually appropriating it. In our faith life God has so ordained that we should live daily out of the appropriation of Jesus' righteousness just as we daily appropriate food and drink to satisfy physical hunger and thirst. We must be constantly laying claim to the righteousness of Jesus. We who are God's children know this by experience. Our daily sins overwhelm us, our failures distress us. We sense our incompleteness and inadequacies. Doubts and fears trouble us. Sometimes we feel so overwhelmed by our feelings of guilt that we need to seek the counsel of friends or pastors. This counsel can be very helpful, but there is one thing we should do first — lay claim to the perfection of Christ for us — His perfect obedience and His atoning death for us. We must find our peace and adequacy in Him and not in ourselves. His righteousness is the foundation from which we can work out our anxieties and problems. On it we can cope with life's difficulties from a position of strength and hope.

*On Christ the solid rock, I stand  
All other ground is sinking sand.*

Another related aspect of this hunger, for right standing with God, is our hunger for *personal* righteousness. That too is a painful hunger. It is the desire to be holy — to have a moral, ethical character that is pleasing to God. We also experience this in a real way as Christians. In the morning we face the day with fresh resolves to put on the whole armour of God, and to put up a valiant fight against selfishness, pride, indolence, envy, and all the temptations of the flesh. But every evening we must confess with tears how little ground we have gained, and sometimes how we have even retreated and lost ground to the enemy.

We have considered up to this point the painful hunger. But the Lord promises that such hunger shall be satisfied. The next question then is, "How do we experience this satisfaction?" To have any particular need satisfied there must be the adequate and proper provision for that need. Let us imagine a man sitting in a stalled car in the middle of a desert. He has some protection from the hot sun and wind, some food, and above all, \$500.00 in his wallet. But — he has no water. Even if he had a thousand dollars in his wallet, and the car full of food, without water, he would die of thirst.

We know that our great need is for the righteousness of Jesus. Only that righteousness satisfies. It is good to remind ourselves that because we are often like the Israelites of Jeremiah's day who forsook the fountain of living waters and hewed themselves cisterns, broken cisterns, that could hold no water.

I suspect that often when we feel anxious and become aware of our inadequacy and failure, we start looking within ourselves to find some basis for satisfaction. We unconsciously try to foster a good feeling within ourselves by searching for some good, some merit, something we are or do that will make us acceptable to God, to others, and to ourselves. We will not find it there! That does not mean that we should not examine our hearts and probe into our motives and feelings. The Psalmist himself says, "Search me O God and try my heart and see if there be a wicked way in me. . . ." But if we are trying to find true and lasting satisfaction in ourselves because of what we are and have done, we will not find it. Only the perfect righteousness of Jesus truly satisfies.

*I look not back, God knows the fruitless efforts  
The wasted hours, the sinning, the regrets  
I look not inward, that would make me wretched  
For I have nought on which to stay my trust.  
But I look up into the face of Jesus  
There my heart can rest, my fears are stilled  
And there is joy and love and light for darkness  
And perfect peace and every hope fulfilled.*

How do we experience this satisfaction? The first blessed satisfaction we experience every time we take hold of the righteousness of Jesus and appropriate it by faith, is peace with God. God has nothing against us. He is our Father. We are no longer restless wanderers, homeless vagabonds, prodigals out of fellowship with the Father. We are children in our Father's home. We are reconciled to God.

This peace leads to peace with ourselves. The law cannot condemn us; conscience may no longer accuse us. We may lay all our doubts and anxieties to rest. We don't have to go to the ends of the earth as some young people literally do to find out who we are. We know who we are — the children of God. What a satisfaction that is! Now we can face the challenge of living as Sons of God. The devil and all his hordes cannot lay anything to the charge of God's elect. It is Christ Jesus who died and is risen again for our justification. We have the love of God and all the



alien powers of the universe cannot separate us from that love. What a genuine satisfaction this is! There are many promises in the Bible that assure us of the immeasurable store-house of provisions God has for His children.

Though this righteousness of Jesus is the basic satisfaction, there is another added to it. It is the satisfaction of working out this righteousness in a life of consecration and obedience. When we have immersed ourselves in the river of God's grace, we cannot be satisfied until we have extended ourselves as a gracious people to a suffering, needy world. When we have experienced the boundless love and forgiveness of God, we cannot experience true gratification until we have shown a loving and forgiving spirit to others.

Our final question is: What is the blessedness in all this? It does not mean that now all our troubles are over, and we are on a roller-coaster ride to heaven. We note that the gateway to righteousness is exceedingly "strait." It is so narrow that we can only get through by leaving ourselves behind. Once we are on the road to heaven, we find it narrow to the end. And very steep! The Bible nowhere promises an easy road to glory.

The blessedness in this painful hungering and thirsting is in the knowledge that we are alive and healthy. It is well with our souls! Think of a person who is never hungry or thirsty. He is either very, very sick, or dead! Hunger pangs and growing pains go together.

*When peace like a river attendeth my way,  
Tho' sorrows like sea billows roll,  
Whatever my lot, thou has taught me to say:  
It is well, it is well with my soul.*

That is the blessedness of this painful hunger. It is a sign of spiritual vigor, and it leads to genuine satisfaction.

We must also experience this satisfaction. It is part of the blessedness. If we do not have peace, and do not know the love of God, then there is something wrong, too. Then we should ask ourselves these questions: Am I drinking of the fountain of living water or am I trying to find fulfillment in the brackish waters of my own broken cisterns? Am I willing to deny myself and walk the narrow road striving for a personal righteousness that is pleasing to God?

Shall this hunger go on forever and ever? Will we always be going through the cycle — hungering, thirsting, finding satisfaction, and yet always again hungering and thirsting? The Book of Revelation gives us the answer to that question. In Revelation 7:16, 17 we read, "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore . . . for the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall be their Shepherd, and shall guide them unto fountains of waters of life; and God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes."

We shall at last arrive at that moral and ethical perfection that delights God. We will be in perfect harmony with God and have perfect fulfillment of every hunger. ●

# LESSONS FROM I JOHN



REV. HENRY VANDER KAM

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## LESSON 12

I John 3:13-24

### *The fruits of love*

Having spoken of the need to love one another as obedience to the gospel of Christ and showing the contrast between believer and unbeliever on this score, the Apostle of love now describes this love more fully and shows us its fruits.

**A problem for the readers** — These fruits of love are not so readily apparent to those to whom John is writing. They are not able to understand the attitude of the world toward them. They have not hurt anyone but, on the contrary, have sought other men's welfare. Yet, they are hated! How is this possible? One would think that the entire world would fall in love with them and honor them. The fruits of love seemed bitter to these early Christians.

John tells them that they must not marvel at the world's reaction. They should not marvel at this because of the nature of that love. Not only does he

tell them not to marvel, but they are to stop it! This must not continue.

We know that we have passed out of death into life: This was, of course, God's doing. When we passed from one state into another (like a change of place) we became strangers to those who did not have this experience. Our love for the brethren was not the ground for that change—but the result of it. Those who do not love each other abide in death. That is the reason why the world hates you—you are strangers to them—whom they do not understand—and, by your works, you show them who they are!

John goes even a giant step farther in describing the lack of love on the part of the world. If they do not love each other, they are murderers! This is indeed strong language. The writer sees either love or hatred—there is no middle ground. He has spoken of Cain. He did not love his brother, instead, he hated him, and that hatred resulted in the murder of his brother. It certainly will be clear to the readers that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him! The direct opposite is in them. Therefore they must not marvel that the world hates them!

**Sacrificial in character**—Having disposed of the problem whereby these early Christians were faced in their relationship with their fellow men, the Apostle now teaches them the true nature of love and its fruits. What is that love which they are to show to the brethren? He shows them that it does not find its origin in man but comes from Another.

To know what love is, we are to look to Jesus Christ. He was the revelation of the love of God. No one will ever be able to understand true love apart from Christ. As he is instructed by Christ in the nature of true love, the believer will understand that it is not something sentimental but, rather, sacrificial! He laid down His life for us. *That* was true love! He did not seek Self but emptied Himself. He gave everything. That love of Christ for His people must be the pattern for the love which believers are to show one another. No, it will never rise to that height; nor will it have the effect which the love of Christ had. Nevertheless, they must follow His example because His was the only true love. We are, therefore, to love to that degree that we become willing to lay down our lives for the brethren.

**Help for those in need**—Let them understand how this love is to operate in their relation one to another. John teaches them by means of a negative example. There are those members of the church to which he is writing who are in possession of material goods. There is nothing wrong in that; it ought to be recognized as a blessing of God.

But, in that same church is a brother in need, i.e., does not have the necessities of life. How can anyone say that the love of God is dwelling in the former if he does not relieve the poverty of the latter? The answer to this question is obvious. He is not called to lay down his life for his brother but only to give him of his goods. If he does not do this, then the sacrificial

love of Christ is totally absent from his heart. True love is not only a feeling within, but it has to come to outward expression. Again, by their fruits ye shall know them.

**Proof of our salvation**—This same truth the Apostle underscores in verse 18. He calls his fellow-believers—his little children—not to love only with the word or tongue, but, in deed and truth. To speak of love is necessary too, but, it must go beyond this. To speak of love is cheap and is difficult to evaluate, but, the deed will assure the genuineness of the spoken word. An expression of faith without works is dead and an expression of love without works is equally dead!

Yet, who is equal to this demand? It seems so natural that mere words are not enough when the deed is so obviously necessary, but, every judgment isn't so easy. The human heart is very complex and desperately wicked. However, the love which we show toward our brother is proof that we are "of the truth." It is a proof of our salvation. This is one of several proofs which John reveals to us in this epistle. As a proof of our salvation, it assures our hearts before Him. We need this demonstration of love for the brethren *for ourselves!* By this "assuring" of our hearts before Him, John means that our hearts are thereby convinced, are satisfied, are at rest. The assurance of faith is a very prominent teaching in this book. John here teaches what the Heidelberg Catechism puts in these words in Lord's Day 32: ". . . then also, that each of us may be assured in himself of his faith by the fruits thereof."

**A source of assurance**—This is the framework for the difficult words which follow. John speaks of our hearts condemning us. What does he mean by this? Every believer must go to the Word of God to receive every assurance he can find. He must also look carefully for the fruits of faith and of love in his own life to give him assurance. Why? Because the believer's heart condemns him again every day. And, it condemns him with a show of justice! He is aware of the multitude and the gravity of his sins. Then the human heart and the conscience which have been schooled in the Word of God begin to condemn him. Then the joy of life is taken away. Then doubt begins to attack the soul.

When this battle rages within the heart and soul of the believer, he must remember that his own heart does not give the final verdict. In faith he is to look to his God Who is greater than our heart. Self-examination which loses sight of the God Who has spoken in His Word can lead to despair. He is, naturally, greater than our hearts and He knows all things. He sees the sins in the human heart but He also sees the fruit of the work of His Son. We are easily blinded by our sins—He never is! The believer may not lose himself in the knowledge of his sin and misery. He must go on to the knowledge of redemption! God knows all things. He doesn't lose His balance.

**Needed for prayer** — John now speaks of the possibility that our hearts do not condemn us. This also seems difficult to understand. However, he is now dealing with a different subject even though the words are so similar to those found in the previous verse. That our hearts do not condemn us is necessary for prayer. “If our heart condemn us not” means that there is no grievous unconfessed sin within us. Sins have been confessed and the assurance of forgiveness is present. Then, says the Apostle, we have boldness toward God. This is an expression which we find more often in the New Testament. Is it proper to have “boldness” toward God? Is it ever proper for the creature to be “bold” when he stands before his Maker? It means: to have freedom of speech! As a child has the freedom to bare his whole heart and soul before his father, so the believer has a “boldness,” a “freedom” before his Father.

When we so come into His presence, “whatever we ask we receive of him.” Is this true? Do we not ask for many things which we never receive? We even speak of “unanswered prayers.” Remember, John is speaking of those whose hearts do not condemn them. This means that their hearts also do not condemn their prayers! They pray for their needs. These are given them. We receive whatever we ask “because we keep his commandments and do the things that are pleasing in his sight.” No, our deeds are not the ground for His answer to our prayers! Only the work of Jesus Christ is the ground for hearing our prayers. Yet, our deeds are necessary. They are the fruit of His finished work. Even the answers to our prayers assure us.

**A divine commandment** — The commandment He has given us is, first of all to believe in His Son, Jesus Christ. Faith is commanded! The person in whom we are to believe is the Son of God, and this Son is Jesus Christ. The Apostle uses these three names to indicate the same person — in distinction from the false teachers with whom they have been in contact. This faith in Jesus Christ must be accompanied by a love to one another. This is the way in which John emphasizes the need to keep both tables of the law. The law has not been abolished by the coming of Jesus Christ into this world but has received a new and richer emphasis.

Those who keep His commandments abide in Him and He in them. Concerning the law it had always been said that man was not able to keep it. Now, after the coming of Jesus Christ into the world and the sacrifice which He brought, the Apostle can speak of those who keep His commandments. He does not only speak of the outward keeping of these commandments, but, keeping them from the heart. When these commandments are so kept, fellowship is restored between God and man. So that the believer may have the certainty that God indeed dwells within him, the writer points to the Spirit’s presence. The Spirit’s presence within us cannot be ignored. He instills a whole new life within us. He gives a different outlook on life. He unites us to the Christ. He causes

us to live out of the principle of love to God and our brethren. All this is possible only if He has regenerated us. When the believer experiences this working within him, he knows that he has been “born again” — that God is abiding within him.

**Questions for discussion:**

1. Is it surprising that the world doesn’t hate the church today? What does this say to us concerning the nature of the church today?
2. Is there love among unbelievers? Explain.
3. How far must our material help for a “brother” go? Do you think there is an over “emphasis on “the cup of cold water” today at the expense of the truth of the gospel?
4. Is it possible to have too dark a picture of our own sin? What does the answer to Question 8 of the Heidelberg Catechism mean?
5. Is there such a thing as “unanswered prayers”?
6. How has “the keeping of His commandments” become possible? Are the demands of the New Testament less than those of the law of Moses?

**LESSON 13**

**I John 4:1-6**

***Testing the spirits***

God has lavished innumerable blessings on His people in the salvation He has prepared for them. It includes the present and the future. It includes their relation to God and to their fellow man. They owe their lives to Him and the true joy of life. These blessings are great and they are many — but they also bring great responsibilities. To keep and enjoy what they have received they will have to recognize these responsibilities. This teaching is pertinent because the church has not always acknowledged this duty.

**Difficult — but necessary** — The early church, to which John is writing, had much to learn regarding the way of salvation which had been revealed to it. They needed a period of time in which they could be properly instructed in the truth of God and see the implications of this truth for their lives. However, that “luxury” was not given them. They must be made aware of all the false prophets which have gone out into the world and are also to be found in their vicinity. Consequently, they may not believe every “spirit,” i.e., everyone who calls himself spirit-led to do prophetic work. Instead, they are called to prove the spirits, to test them as metal is tried. They must test these spirits to determine whether they are of God or are not of Him.

This was a tremendous task assigned to people who did not have a rich heritage of theology behind them. They would have to test the spirits by their knowledge of the truth. Satan’s clever impersonators would have to be unmasked by these rather new and simple Christians.

Even today, after centuries of development, the church often finds it difficult to distinguish between truth and error! False prophets came as soon as the



gospel came and they will continue to the end of time. Whether His people are ready for the conflict or not, the danger is threatening. The believers individually and the church as a body must "prove the spirits" or the truth is lost. There might be the inclination to believe every spirit because they all claimed to be filling the prophet's office. John warns them that this attitude will be fatal. They are called to follow the teachings of the true prophets in obedient faith and to dismiss the teachings of the false prophets as lies! This may be difficult — but it has to be done!

**The standard for judging** — The question, of course, arises: By what standard are they to "prove the spirits" to see whether they are of God? The "confessions" of the church had not yet been written. These "confessions" must be tested by the Word of God. They do have that Word. They are not to lose themselves in all the various teachings of that Word. As Paul often said, they must not lose themselves in genealogies and such things.

No, they are to go to the heart of the gospel! Do the "spirits" who teach them confess that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh? That is the fundamental question. In that day there were those who did not believe that the Christ had come in the flesh. They did not believe that Jesus and Christ were the same person. If they confess that Jesus is the Christ who is come in the flesh, they know that those are the true prophets of God speaking by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. If they do not confess Jesus to be the Christ, they are not of God. This makes the test rather simple.

Those who do not confess Jesus to be the Christ Who came in our nature have nothing to teach the believers. His readers may not conclude that — even though they cannot agree with such "spirits" concerning the person of Christ — they can still learn much from them. These "false prophets" must be recognized for what they are — the spirit of the anti-christ! They are the enemies of his Lord. They have one purpose in mind — to destroy the people of God!

John herewith places these "heretics" in a place which they have seldom occupied in the history of the church. So much good was often seen in the most destructive heresies. John, led by the Spirit of God, paints the picture unmistakably clear and says it is the spirit of antichrist. He had spoken of this spirit before (chapter 2). They therefore know what he means. This spirit of antichrist was to come, but, they need not look into the future, it is here now!

Why does the Apostle use such strong and sharp language to denounce these false prophets? The fact that the Son of God, Christ Jesus, came in the flesh made it possible for Him to live our life, to die, and to rise again. That purchased our salvation! If Jesus was not the Christ, if the Son of God did not come in the flesh, we would have no Savior. These false prophets are cutting the heart out of the gospel. They must prove the spirits because their life is at stake. These who speak of Jesus as a great teacher, or a

marvelous example, or many other fine things, are false prophets if they do not confess that He was the Son of God come in the flesh! This they must see clearly. This must be seen clearly by the church in every age.

Although it may now be clear to the readers that they will not be able to ignore these false prophets but must take a definite stand against them, it may seem to be a hopeless task. The believers are still few in number and the false prophets are many. They are still babes in the faith while the opposition is well-trained. The dilemma for them is: if they do not prove the spirits they lose the gospel; and if they prove the spirits they will lose and might even forfeit their lives.

**Assurance of victory** — The Apostle now addresses himself to this difficulty. His command to prove the spirits stands. They may not have a defeatist attitude because they are of God. By this he does not merely mean that they are on His side, but that they are born of God. Seeing that they are born of God they are His children. You "have overcome" them, John says. They must still begin or continue to prove the spirits, but they have already overcome them! This is typical New Testament language. It is so certain that they will be victorious that he is already able to speak of it as having occurred. They do not have to fear these false prophets.

The reason they do not have to fear their opposition is because the God Who is in them is greater than he that is in the world. God's cause always wins! No one shall ever be able to withstand Him. No one can reply to Him. He is the One Who dwells in His people. The world may make a show of strength but the victory belongs to God and to His people. There is no dilemma. There is only one requirement — obedient faith! Prove the spirits. Reject what is false. Obey the truth. So is this early church strengthened and encouraged. They are called to be faithful to their profession and leave the result to their God. This is the difficult lesson the church of every age must learn.

**Spirits "of the world"** — Having spoken of the believers being of God, the writer now characterizes the false prophets. Instead of being of God, they are of the world, in the sense of that which is opposed to God. Because they are of the world they seek the world alone. They have no interest in anything which does not belong to the world. They have no interest in the things of God. Therefore they reject the Christ as He is revealed in the Scriptures. If they are to deal with Him at all they will do so from a worldly point of view. Jesus to them was only a man, perhaps the best, but still only a man! This is only natural for them because they can only speak of the world. This world is the only reality. That which is not of the world belongs in the realm of the myth, the fable and superstition.

The world hears them. They listen to them and believe them because their teaching speaks to their

hearts. The world isn't ready to listen to the gospel. Something has to happen to a man before he will listen to that which is "foolishness to the Greeks and a stumbling block to the Jews." The heart must be completely renewed before a man will listen to and believe the gospel. But, "the world heareth them"!

**John also involved** — The truth which John has set forth in these verses is so important to the life of believers that they must see the whole issue. But, he is not able merely to argue the truth of that which he has written, he is involved himself! In verse four he tells them that *they* are of God. In verse six he says: *We* are of God. The problems which his "little children" face he faces. The victory which is theirs is his. He comes with apostolic authority — but *he* is also a member of the body of Christ! He is an Apostle of the Lamb — but also a sinner saved by grace. This fact brings him so close to his readers. He shares their weaknesses and strengths.

Those who know God hear us. He now places himself among those who have taught the true gospel of Jesus Christ. Those who listen to and believe the true gospel are the ones who know God. The gospel speaks to them. They understand it and it is food for their souls. The Spirit of God speaks in the gospel and that same Spirit witnesses within their hearts. The gospel separates men. When that gospel is proclaimed it becomes evident who knows God and who is not of Him. For the one it is the nourishment unto eternal life and for the other it is foolishness and a stumbling block. True preaching has awesome power!

"By this we know the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error." These were the spirits to be tested or distinguished. The spirit of error denies this. The spirit of truth speaks to those who are born of God. The spirit of error speaks to those who are of the world. It might have seemed difficult to them at the beginning when he commanded them to test these spirits. Now it ought to be clear that it can be done quite easily. They are opposites! This is clear from both the teaching and the effect.

#### Questions for discussion:

1. Do you think it necessary today to emphasize the need of proving the spirits? What would you reply to one who speaks of the sincerity of members of sects?
2. What is to be our standard for judging the truth or falsehood of a teaching — our confessions or the Bible? Explain.
3. What do you think of the philosophy that no church has all the truth and we are also able to learn much from others? Would John agree to this? Would the Reformers have agreed to this?
4. Are there still those who deny that Jesus and Christ were one and the same person? Do some still deny the humanity of Christ?
5. Some mission enthusiasts say that the world is hungry for the gospel. Is this true? How would they know.

# dating: *with or without* DANCING

DWIGHT SMALL

Once taboo, social dancing has gained acceptance within a segment of the evangelical community. Does this mean that we are moving away from the unduly restrictive standards once imposed upon young people?

Or is it an overreaction against the unreasonable strictures of brittle legalism, reflecting the larger trend toward the complacent identification of Christians with their non-Christian environment?

In *A Guide to Civilized Leisure*, Harry Overstreet writes: "A modern social dance, in short, is as often as not a most unsocial phenomenon. Among college men and women it has tended to become a means of severe sexual competition. So the dance has in large measure ceased to be the dance, and has become a kind of terpsichorean stock exchange in which the male members of the exchange do their bidding for their favorites. This individualized form of dance has carried with it also some of the peculiar cruelties for competitive civilization."

A secular critique of this nature gives rise to serious questions among Christians and non-Christians alike. For the Christian a decision against dancing as a part of dating will more often than not invite challenge. I would like to suggest that repudiation of dancing can be supported from both Christian behavior principles and sound sociological data. We need never fear the force of facts; rather we may face them with the assurance that the Christian evaluation will be clearly substantiated.<sup>1</sup>

When we examine the premises of those who affirm a rightful place for dancing, we see that they are only partially valid at best. Let's look at three of these premises to demonstrate the point.

(1) Ballroom dancing is classified as a recreational pleasure, for it combines elements of recreation, relaxation and amusement. But this is oversimplified.

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Dancing, more than any other recreational medium, profoundly involves the whole personality. Psychological factors are more significant than the merely recreational.

(2) Ballroom dancing is classified as an art form, for it contains aesthetic elements. It requires technique, and it represents grace of bodily movement. Again, this is oversimplified. Aesthetic values are diminished by the communication of a prevalent erotic idea.

(3) Ballroom dancing is classified as an educational and socializing force. As such it is considered a therapeutic agency. London's *The Dancing Times* has as its object the establishment of dancing as a recognized branch of general education. Educators on levels down to grade school endorse dancing as part of the school program. The following statement is probably typical:

"It is much easier for a child to learn to dance and to adjust to a group of mixed sexes before adolescent conflicts and emotional problems are established. At the approach of adolescence, when mutual sex attraction makes a boy-girl relationship desirable and inevitable, a dancing class provides the stimulus and the techniques for making that adjustment naturally and easily."

But is it desirable for children to make such adjustments prior to the natural time in adolescence? Should all such adolescent conflicts be removed? Rather, may not some of these conflicts be natural safeguards which in the final analysis are more to be desired than easy adjustments?

Dancing may build confidence in those who feel socially inferior, and may socialize those who tend to retreat into social isolation. But surely there are other ways of accomplishing the same result. The question is whether the disadvantages may not outweigh the advantages. Does dancing really permit an individual to acquire and conserve the more worthwhile benefits?

### Dancing and emotion

We move closer to the real issue when we say that dancing is essentially a medium of self-expression and self-communication. This definition comes directly from a recognized authority, John Martin, dance critic for the *New York Times*: "When men are deeply stirred, they resort automatically to spontaneous bodily movement to express their emotional states and convictions which are too elemental to be rationalized in words. Such movement becomes a direct means of emotional communication — an instantaneous transfer, so to speak, of pure mood."

This leads to the question: What elemental emotional states are spontaneously expressed and communicated by the music, rhythms, bodily contact and movements of modern ballroom dancing?

The *Encyclopedia of Social Sciences* further defines dancing as "an externalization of emotional energy." "Physiologically, dancing is a vent for excitement." When we ask what kind of excitement it stimulates, the answer from this same source is: "It is

nevertheless true that since sexual impulses are excited by dancing, many dances that have had their origin in other sources are attributed erroneously to this cause because they have led eventually to sex indulgence." What an indictment from a non-Christian source. Non-Christians are sometimes more discerning than Christians. Those who counsel young people on this question of social dancing frequently discover that honest fellows readily admit the sexual stimulation that accompanies dancing, whereas girls more frequently can see no problem, admitting only to a general excitement and pleasure. This, of course, concurs with the differentiation of sexual nature between the male and female, especially as it regards effective stimulation of sex desire.

This same encyclopedia adds: "Increasing freedom in the relations of the sexes has been paralleled by increasing freedom in dance forms."

Dr. Emory Bogardus, professor of social psychology at the University of Southern California, concludes that dancing "has one leading social function to it, that of facilitating the mutual approach of the sexes . . . it perennially stresses degrading patterns." This is confirmed by critic John Martin, who writes: "The struggle to subject dancing to decorum is a long-standing, determined, and ultimately hopeless one, rather like trying to inure the devil to holy water. Truth to tell, dances are inevitably more or less crude of surface when they spring spontaneously to life, for the dancers care less than nothing about how they look. Since it is likely to be amorous emotion, the movements that it creates are clearly not going to be cold and aloof. But when decorum censors and modifies them so that they acquire elegance, it takes away their function, and before you know it the dancers are off again creating new dances to give them emotional satisfaction." Martin concludes, "The dancers are bound to win in the end, for exuberance and creative impulses are not controllable by code."

Incidentally, this is a final answer to the argument for supervised dances. As has been forcibly said: "You cannot supervise the eyes, thoughts, imaginations or nerve-centers."

The *Textbook of Social Dancing* by Agnes and Lucille Marsh of Columbia University says: "The social dance, then, can be designed as love-dancing. It is the expression of the sex philosophy of a given period. We must consider the social dance as a manifestation of the sex psychology and philosophy of the time." So, as high as the sex morality of non-Christians at a given day, so high and no higher will dancing be capable of interpretation.

When one honestly evaluates the sex philosophy of our day, and the prominent role of social dancing in its expression, one must conclude that here is a realm of ethical behavior that has been captured by the god of this world and is one of his delights. However harmful or not to the participant, earnest Christians must regard it as a matter of identification with ideals that are not Christian.

*Colliers Encyclopedia* declares: "The social dance



has usually been the result of joint physical exuberance and sex stimuli." And the sociologist, Munsterberg, tells us that peaks of interest in dancing historically correspond to peaks of social stagnation and carelessness, and indifference to public life and responsibility. Dancing is recognized as one of the chief escape functions. Munsterberg further points out that tyrants have often promoted public dancing in order to divert the attention of the masses from political corruption. He adds that the lower the stratum in society, the more emphasis is found upon dancing. Even H. L. Mencken (in his *Treatise on Right and Wrong*) comments on the new morality of our day in these words: "Moreover, the general laxity of manners has liberated many ancient incitements to dalliance, including especially alcohol and the dance."

### Music and rhythm

It is impossible to consider the nature of social dancing apart from the music and rhythm that are so much a part of it. Consider first the rhythm.

The body rhythms essential to life (such as breathing, heart-beat and walking) establish man as a rhythmic being. Emotionally, excitement and ecstasy are associated with rhythm. Rhythm can induce auto-intoxication. The close association between rhythm and sexual excitement is well known.

Rhythm identifies individuals with each other. Military leaders recognize this, as demonstrated by group calisthenics executed in regular rhythm, or in the goose-step of the Nazi youth movement.

If rhythm can induce auto-intoxication and sexual excitement, the perils of dancing become immediately evident. Add to this the close embrace and sensual music. The embrace and rhythm in dancing make the partners one in movement. In her book, *Personality*, Marjorie Greenbie writes: "The modern dance is more subtle in its demands . . . it depends on the closest psychic union, for the moment, between the partners, and a response to the almost unconscious intimations of one to the other." Small wonder that men have always found dancing to be the most effective initial step toward promiscuity. No matter what else may be said, the dance depends upon the proprietary embrace and rhythmic suggestibility.

In this rhythmic oneness, the woman is pliant while the man leads, suggesting that both the will and body of the woman are subject to those of the man.

Dr. Foster Kennedy, Cornell neurologist, says: "The more primitive a people, the more is the beat stressed in their music." Jitterbug is perhaps the closest parallel to jungle dancing. One would conclude that this is because the same primitive emotions are being expressed.

Liberty of bodily movement is always imperiled by the tendency to licentiousness. Mere movement as such produces excitement, as we know. This could not be more evident than in the "Twist," which produces enormous emotional excitement and conveys uninhibited sexual overtones. Uniformity of movement (rhythm) produces emotional ecstasy. One effect

of this is psychological detachment from the environment. This is seen in the hypnotic effect of primitive dervishes. Rational patterns are subordinated to the emotional by persistent rhythm, until the mind is detached from much of the immediate environment. There is instead an emotional concentration that leads to an ecstatic experience. This amounts to an inhibition of moral sensitivity, which is demonstrated in the auto-intoxication induced by savage war dances and dervishes. The individual loses control of his will and becomes a servant of the rhythm and excitement. He becomes willingly identified with whatever demands his excitement puts before him. If the demands are sexual, his self-control is severely tested.

The music that accompanies social dancing contains two important elements. One is the use of highly exciting dissonances, such as in modern jazz. The other is close harmony put to slow rhythm. What subtle idea does each interpret? Dissonance is simply the violation of harmonic laws. Whereas musical harmony finds an emotional response of acceptance, dissonance creates emotional excitement and resistance. The highly exciting dissonance represents a revolt of the ego against the confinements of authority, against imposed standards. The revolting ego of man craves independence and the spontaneous expression of its moods and desires. For this reason, musical anarchy creates a disturbance in our emotional nature. This disturbance is exciting. Musical anarchy finds its correspondence in the sinful nature of man's ego which would defy the laws of God and His authority. It represents the breaking away from established limits, the discarding of established restrictions.

On the other hand, close harmony set to slow rhythm is sensually suggestive. It accentuates the idea of closeness. The dancers' personalities are subject to the sensuous appeal for closeness and the domination of bodily movement. Most ballroom dancing is accompanied by this second type of music and rhythm.

### History of dancing

The history of dancing is important for this study, and may help us arrive at a better estimate of where it is going.

Early dancing masters, such as Guglielmo in the fifteenth century, distinguished between "dance as an art, and a vile adulterous affair." Count Baldassare Castiglione (the Emily Post of the Renaissance) tells us that French dances such as Brando and Moresca are indecent. To shield their identity, men wore disguises when they danced. The indecent Brando was refined into the minuet. But when it became refined, the minuet was quickly discarded, and from a whirling German peasant dance came the face-to-face waltz.

Disapproval of the waltz was violent until Czar Alexander II danced it publicly at Almacks in 1816, giving it respectability overnight.

In 1910 the ragtime revolution broke out from

cheap dives across America. Finally it was standardized in the form of the fox-trot and one-step. These in turn led to ever new forms, each one successively needing refinement. Notably, since 1910 dance forms have developed clearly in the direction of freedom between the sexes, and the discarding of the inhibitions of modesty.

The slow fox-trot and the one-step are based on old ragtime dances of the primitive negro underworld. The Lindy is entirely primitive in style and form. The Samba came to the United States via Brazil, where it was introduced centuries ago by African slaves.

Modern social dancing came in part from the sixteenth-century French. Catherine DeMedici introduced the fashion into France. From Paris came leadership for all Europe in both immodest fashion and immodest dance.

The Tango, Conga and Samba all came to the United States from Latin America, and for the most part from the slum brothels where they are recognized as interpretive of adultery. So we see that historically, dance origins relate to expressions of licentiousness.

Even medical science clearly identifies dancing as a sex stimulant, going so far as to define it as an erotic exercise, as part of the sexual commerce itself. *Medical Review of Reviews* states: "There can be scarcely any doubt that dancing came about as an adjunct of sexual stimulation." Professor W. C. Wilkinson of the University of Chicago analyzed the modern dance as "a system of means, contrived with more than human ingenuity, to excite the instinct of sex into action." Roman Catholic Archbishop Spaulding of New York said that the confessional reveals the fact that nearly every known lapse of female virtue is traceable to the dance.

Judges dealing with the attraction of teen-agers to roadside dance halls tells us that the supervised dance is the first step to trouble, for it is not satisfying emotionally but becomes a feeder to less frigid dance resorts and the teen-age rendezvous. The significant point here is the tacit acknowledgment that dancing is emotionally exciting in the particular sense that it inflames sexual desires.

If Christian young men and women are to present their bodies as living sacrifices to God, and if the body is a sacred trust from God, the "temple of the Holy Spirit," then it is only reasonable to evaluate modern social dancing as a perilous incitement to lust. And since dancing involves two persons, one who dances without impure thoughts cannot assume that this will also be true of the other. Thus one may unknowingly contribute to the secret indulgence of lust in another.

Dancing, like petting, will remove the desire for other wholesome activities which a couple may enjoy together with more profit and less tension. It is for these considerations that dancing may be regarded by the Christian as falling far short of the purposes of God for the sanctity of dating. ●

1. In quest of an objective evaluation for those who would be mature disciples of Jesus Christ, my frame of reference will necessarily involve extensive use of secular sources.

# from diapers to diploma

The Planned Parenthood Association has publicized alarming figures clearly designed to discourage childbearing. According to their highly suspect statistics it's supposed to cost from \$70,000 to \$107,000 to raise a child from diapers to college diploma. The larger figure includes lost earning power of the mother sacrificing her career in order to be "just a housewife."

Although such figures overlook young people working their way through college and in general are patently absurd — a statement I make as the father of five who are being raised satisfactorily even though the Lord has not supplied the \$350,000 to \$535,000 the Zero Population Growth people maintain we need to rear them — many couples have swallowed the anti-child propaganda poison and are so intimidated that they feel even having one child would demand unbelievable financial sacrifices and interfere too much with their modern American materialistic and pleasure-mad lifestyle.

How sad to hear in premarital counseling even our Lutheran youth claiming they can't afford to think of having children for several years and then to see them drive off in expensive cars to luxuriously appointed apartments with color TV and stereo! Have we parents, pastors, and teachers perhaps become too mired in materialism ourselves that we can't convince our offspring that receiving children as precious gifts of God and bringing them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord is much more satisfying and God-pleasing than piling up property and possessions which so soon rot and rust away?

Wisconsin Synod couples, blessed with fertility, need not feel guilty about bringing children into a world allegedly threatened by the specter of overpopulation, not if they are truly Christian parents and give this sin-corrupted world what it needs most — youngsters properly trained to live their Christian faith, to talk about their Savior, to witness by word and deed to the Gospel of the crucified and risen Lord Jesus.

Christian parents, who seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, will surely receive, as Jesus promised (Matt. 6:33), the material things needed to adequately provide for their children from diapers to (high school and/or college) diploma.

Reuel J. Schulz

The above article is from the November 28, 1977 *Christian News*.

**LETTER  
TO  
THE  
EDITOR**

**ABOUT A  
"UNITED REFORMED CHURCH"**

My editorial in July on "Desideratum - A United Reformed Church" called for a measure of response to which, due to circumstances, attention has not been given until now. At the outset the editorial stated:

"An exciting prospect - Suppose that in God's gracious providence the day would dawn when Reformed church bodies - of course, I am thinking particularly of the CRC - would experience a drastic housecleaning. Suppose that such denominations would some day purge themselves of the foe within the gate and of those bold innovations that now threaten to undermine the Reformed faith. And suppose that out of the tensions, all in God's gracious providence, a new denomination would emerge - a denomination that would not shilly-shally in its witness to the Reformed faith; but a church that would rather be unambiguous, consistent, and enthusiastic in its profession of it. Just suppose that someday God would be pleased to grant this . . . allow me then to suggest as a name, that it be called The United Reformed Church."

A correspondent from Florida who, for a specified and understandable reason, chooses to remain anonymous, makes the following suggestions:

"Referring to the July-1977 Outlook where you are seeking for suggestions for a new denomination:

"My first suggestion concerns the name. I would prefer to call it The Orthodox Christian Reformed Church rather than the United Reformed Church. Reason: The O.C.R.C. name would be more attractive to Christian Reformed people. Why should we lose our precious name? After all, we are not leaving the church - the church is leaving us. The name Christian Reformed belongs to us, not only us but our children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. We received it from our parents, grandparents, and possibly great-grandparents. I know there are many people in our church today that would refuse to give up the name Christian Reformed. Also whole con-

gregations would possibly vote themselves into the O.C.R.C. So much for the name which I believe to be very important.

"Secondly: Set up a fund for the new denomination. This way all interested could stand up and be counted by making contributions. If and when the new denomination is organized this money to be used for new congregations. If the new church does not materialize money to be used for truly Reformed theological seminaries.

"Thirdly: New congregations starting that are too small to have their own minister could use tapes. Not that I wish to boycott ministers. We pray daily for more Reformed theologians, especially for this nation where millions are being deceived with cheap grace. God has given us this new invention - why not use it? Taped sermons are played in our home with much joy and spiritual edification.

"My fourth suggestion: No doubt THE OUTLOOK will be the new church paper. Would like to see it changed from monthly to a biweekly. Your Outlook is a very good paper, but does not come around too often. We all know this is very serious business, and we can't be informed too often."

*Comment:* The writer's suggestions, together with other communications to be published later, are placed in the hopper for our readers' consideration. The kind and encouraging comments about THE OUTLOOK are truly appreciated. The expense of publishing bi-weekly is one reason for making this prohibitive for the present. JVP

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Dear Mr. Vander Ploeg,

I wish to respond to your editorial in THE OUTLOOK re Social Dancing. It is out of concern for the Christian community and fellow students at Calvin that I desire to comment.

As you, yourself, are aware social dancing is very much a reality beyond the realms of Calvin College. It includes the Christian Reformed community as a whole. Therefore it is a denominational issue rather than one aimed at Calvin or any other higher institution.

Since this issue is a delicate one, that can be misconstrued the farther it gets from the source, it is imperative that we realize all the ramifications and consequences involved with social dancing. The Bible does not state specifically whether dancing is right or wrong. It neither condones it nor condemns it. I believe, as many others do, that the many misconceptions of dancing have been brought to our attention through an unbelieving society. The world has made dancing a "sexually" connotated activity. Many even associate drinking and drugs with dancing. But this does not necessarily have to be so. Dancing within a Christian framework can be wholesome and recreational. It can be a time of fellowship and meeting new people just like any other social event. We in the Christian community believe this and consequently support the Board's decision.

Learning to dance certainly does not come overnight when a student attends college. He/she must have learned to dance previously. It seems highly probable that these students have danced in high school with parental consent. The Board had just put into words what was in practice everywhere for past years. By everywhere I mean the high schools, Dordt, Trinity, and Calvin. All this, taking place with the administrations full knowledge.

Finally, it may be fitting, Mr. Vander Ploeg, that you visit Calvin College. You may be "surprised" or "shocked" to find more committed Christians than you think.

In Christ,

RENATA VAN DER WAL

P.S. It is my hope that you publish this letter in THE OUTLOOK at your earliest convenience.

P.P.S. I am one of your subscribers of late and my parents have received it for quite some time.



### A CHANGE OF DRIVERS

In the course of a long automobile trip the hours of close attention that have to be given to the road eventually make it necessary or desirable to change drivers.

Something like this is occurring in the editorial office of THE OUTLOOK. Rev. J. Vander Ploeg, after seven years of diligent and faithful service as the managing editor and a period of illness, felt that the time had come for a change of drivers. The Board is grateful to the Lord and to him for the way in which THE OUTLOOK has prospered under his management. The number of copies have more than doubled from about 2800 per month to about 6000 during this time, and the finances of the magazine have regularly come to be in the black. On issues that have arisen in the churches THE OUTLOOK has tried to take a firm, responsible Biblical position under Rev. J. Vander Ploeg's dedicated leadership. The Board is grateful for these labors and thankful too that he has been making a good recovery after his illness and will continue to serve as assistant to the Editor.

The Board has asked Rev. Peter De Jong, who has been serving as president of the Fellowship to take the post of Managing Editor and Mr. Peter Wobbema, THE OUTLOOK's long-time printer to be production manager.

Officers of the Fellowship Board for the coming year are: Dr. Renze O. De Groot, president; Sidney De Young, vice president; Dr. Ronald J. Van Putten, treasurer; Peter Wobbema, assistant secretary-treasurer. We ask for the continuing prayers and support of our members and the guidance of the Lord in our labors as Reformed Fellowship.

THE BOARD

\* \* \* \* \*

*A Bible-break like a coffee-break,  
Will stimulate, make you wide awake.  
A fifteen minute interlude,  
Will nourish, give you vital food.*

S.C.W.

### A CORRECTION

Rev. Robert W. DeVries has called attention to an error in the July, 1977 editorial on "The Social Dance at Calvin College." In the original draft of that article the text of the Calvin Board of Trustees' decision was quoted in full, but in the final copy a significant part of that decision was inadvertently and completely unintentionally omitted. We quote the Board's decision, italicizing the part which was left out:

1. The Board instructs the Administration to implement immediately the development of social dancing in a Christian manner by:
  - a. instructing its art, music, drama, and physical education departments to provide leadership and direction in using the social dance in a Christian way, and
  - b. *encouraging students to exercise their Christian liberty in the spirit of the admonitions of the Apostle Paul found in I Corinthians 6:12-14 and I Corinthians 8.*

#### Grounds:

- a. *We have a tendency to adopt uncritically a dance style that ignores the richer dimensions of the social dance, such as the aesthetic, the creative, the cultural, the musical, etc.*
- b. "All Christians, according to the talents God has given them, must work positively and constructively to fulfil the cultural mandate." (*Acts of Synod, 1966, p. 34*).
- c. A policy allowing students the freedom to dance ought to be accompanied by instructions to those who guide these students to provide leadership in implementation, and by instructions to the students themselves."

We regret that this error occurred, we thank Rev. Mr. DeVries for calling it to our attention and gladly make this correction.

THE EDITORS