

THE **OUTLOOK**

DEVOTED TO THE EXPOSITION AND DEFENSE OF THE REFORMED FAITH

JUNE 1979



**GOOD PREACHERS
CHRISTIAN EDUCATION
ANOTHER BATTLE FOR THE BIBLE**

CRC SYNOD OF '79 — ANOTHER "BATTLE FOR THE BIBLE"

John Vander Ploeg

Although everything on the *Agenda* for the CRC Synod is significant, not every item is of equal importance. Going through the 568-page *Agenda* leaves me with the impression that there is one issue of supreme importance and that it should be kept clearly in focus.

The purpose of these lines is to zero in on that issue. The CRC Synod of '79 will be, as I see it, another "battle for the Bible." We are indebted to Harold Lindsell for that designation used by him as the title for his significant book that claimed such wide attention and also occasioned such sharp debate.

A Crucial Issue — The issue unquestionably is crucial. Dead wrong though he could be, Voltaire was right on target in what he is reported to have once said: "If we would destroy the Christian religion, we must first of all destroy man's belief in the Bible." The two always stand or fall together.

Does the CRC have a future? Not just for this year or next year but for our children and grandchildren and also for future generations. As a mere organization of men, the CRC may continue even until the end of time — the longevity of even the most apostate church organizations witnesses to that — but, as a manifestation of the true church of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, the CRC will go on on-ly as long as we contend earnestly in our "battle for the Bible" as the inspired, infallible, inerrant, and authoritative Word of God. The true church *always* depends on the Bible.

Indeed, the issue is crucial. That fact is spelled out clearly in the Bible itself, in the beginning, middle, and end. Woe to him who tampers with God's own inviolable Word.

Early in Scripture, we are told: "Ye shall not add unto the Word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish from it . . ." (Deut. 4:2).

About midway in the Bible, again the warning comes in no uncertain terms: "Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar" (Prov. 30:6).

And then, almost like a clap of thunder, as the inspired Scriptures come to a close, the same warning is sounded once more in language so severe and final as to leave every detractor of the Word without ex-

cuse: "I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, if any man shall add unto them, God shall add unto him the plagues that 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).

Indeed, this is a crucial matter!

Thomas Howard, professor of English at Gordon College, said it well in his article on "The Touchstone" in the January 5, '79 issue of *Christianity Today*:

"Any serious and thoughtful Christian is a dogmatist, not in the sense of being pig-headed or ostrich-like, but in the sense of having a lively awareness that he stands in a defined tradition of received teaching that has been articulated by the holy prophets and apostles, and handed down through the centuries. It is spelled out in the Bible and proclaimed by the Church. . . ."

Let's make no mistake about it, this matter is crucial to the nth degree!

A Recurring Issue — A careful examination of the *Agenda* for the CRC Synod of '79 reveals that repeatedly we are being confronted with this issue: another "battle for the Bible." Attention may be called to the following items:

1. **Capital punishment** — Society today is being ridden with the plague of a proliferating crime situation that stalks and haunts especially the elderly both by day and by night. Surely, this is not a time for the abolition of capital punishment or any mitigation of the divine ordinance that it be exercised.

In 1976 Classis Orange City overtured Synod "to address our national government as to the need of the reestablishment of capital punishment in a manner that respects the sovereignty of the state but expresses the imperatives of God's Word which the church confesses; that Synod enlist the classes and consistories (congregations) to cooperate in addressing state governments accordingly."

The meaning and intent of Classis Orange City were very clear. Capital punishment as a divine ordinance for murder was for them, even as it has been and is for so many others, incontrovertible according to the Bible. "Genesis 9:6," according to the overture, "has been traditionally acknowledged as the classic passage to teach that capital punishment is required for crimes of murder"

That's what Orange City assumed to be the plain teaching of the Bible, even as many of us believe. But the irony in the outcome of Orange City's overture to Synod is that Synod is now being confronted with a quite different recommendation.

To deal with Orange City's overture, Synod appointed a study committee consisting of Doctors Henry Stob, Clarence Vos, Hessel Bouma III, Stephen Monsma, and Louis Vos who make a lengthy report (40 pages) recommending something very different from what was requested. The committee recommends that Synod declare:

"a. that the Scriptures *lay no mandate* [italics added] on modern states to exercise capital punishment;

"b. that the Scriptures *do permit* [italics added] modern states to inflict capital punishment;

"c. that according to the spirit of Scriptures capital punishment is prudently exercised only under extreme conditions and not as a general rule."

What we are left with then, as Bible believers, to tell the government is only this: "You have no divine mandate or ordinance to put the murderer to death but you do have the Lord's permission to do so. And so, it's up to you."

Like the prophets of old, the church must speak to the civil authorities only if it has something to say as a clear and unambiguous "Thus saith the Lord!" In addressing the civil authorities the trumpet must give no uncertain sound.

The committee writes page after page after page in an attempt to convince us that capital punishment is optional. However, despite their labored reasoning, Genesis 9:5, 6 still sounds loud, clear and convincing:

"And from each man too, I will demand an accounting for the life of his fellow man. 'Whosoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made man . . .'" (NIV).

It is good to know that the committee does not share the position adopted in 1965 by the Synod of the Reformed Church in America when it decided the following: "The taking of a person's life, even within the context of the law, is a denial of the command to love your neighbor as yourself." However, let's not be too sure that we will not arrive at the same conclusion if we once declare that Scripture does not lay down a divine ordinance or mandate "on modern states to exercise capital punishment." Let's be realistic and recognize what we will encounter when once we are a little farther down the road.

2. Women deacons — Prominent in the minds of anyone somewhat familiar with the *Agenda* for this year's Synod is the question whether last year's decision to have women in the office of deacon will be upheld or not. Because of the Scriptural considerations at stake, this too may well develop into another "battle for the Bible."

Overtures and appeals, some fifty of them, about last year's decision, will claim the attention of Synod as it meets this month. It is gratifying that they have all been allowed to be placed in the printed *Agenda*. The great majority of these are negative or thumbs down on having women in the office of deacon. Obviously arising from the grass roots of the denomination, from the east and from the west and also from in-between, from both north and south of the border, there is a voice of dissent that is not to be disregarded.

Although it may not be a torrent, this discontent will be misjudged if it is thought to be just a mere trickle, or nothing else than the mumbling and sputtering of a few die-hard conservatives that can safely be ignored. There are limits to the tension that a denomination can bear without coming to the breaking point. Important and precious as they may be, if peace and unity can be maintained only at the cost of compromising the authority of Scripture as our only

THE

OUTLOOK

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"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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Contents:

June, 1979	Volume XXIX	No. 6
C.R.C. SYNOD OF 1979 — ANOTHER BATTLE FOR THE BIBLE		2
John Vander Ploeg		
A VOICE OUT OF THE AUDIENCE		5
John Piersma		
LETTERS TO THE EDITOR		6
REFORMED WOMEN SPEAK —		
ROOTLESS SOULS		9
Laurie Vanden Heuvel		
OUR QUESTION BOX		11
Harlan Vanden Einde		
CHRISTIAN EDUCATION		12
Rev. Fred Gunnink		
CONFERENCE ON REFORMED EVANGELISM		13
Mr. & Mrs. Kasjen Tebben		
MEDITATION		15
John Blankespoor		
PREDICAMENT OF A CONSERVATIVE		16
John Byker		
DOCTRINE OF CHRIST		19
Jerome M. Julian		
GIVE US GOOD PREACHERS		20
G. Lievaart		
AN ALARMING TREND		22
Henry Baker		
A LOOK AT BOOKS		24

rule for faith and practice, their price is then just too high.

With good reason, people in the CRC know that next will be the effort also to have women in the offices of the Elder and the Minister. Fact is that right now Synod is also being overtured to "consider the feasibility of permitting those churches that are ready to do so to ordain women as elders." The Consistory of the Hope CRC of Oak Forest, Illinois, gives the following as one of the grounds for its request:

"The possibility of using these churches now ready for female elders as 'pilot projects' for a designated period of time and so enable Synod and the denomination to study and assess the effects of such a change, as it works out in practice rather than just theoretically, deserves serious study by a study committee" (1979 *Agenda*, p. 527).

Whether or not women are to be deacons, elders, and ministers is too important to be decided by experimentation. Let the delegates thoroughly familiarize themselves with the pronouncements of Scripture on this important matter. And then, if they come to the conclusion that the Bible allows no warrant for women in these offices, let them vote according to their consciences and refuse to be swayed by pragmatic considerations, by which way the wind happens to be blowing, or by forceful oratory, to the contrary. Armed with the Word as the sword of the Spirit, let them stand up to be counted and contend earnestly as once again there is to be a "battle for the Bible."

3. Admit Lodge Members — A recurring issue at the meetings of the CRC Synod has been the exclusion of lodge members from membership in the church as long as such persons refuse to terminate their membership in such a fraternal organization. Now this old bone of contention is again on Synod's *agenda*. To this writer, as a long-time attendant at the meetings of Synod, it would seem to be more than high time to decide that this issue is not to take up any more of Synod's valuable time unless something definitely new can be presented. Threshing over the old straw endlessly should not be expected of the church that has repeatedly made its position clear on this matter.

Coming from the Richfield CRC of Clifton, New Jersey, Overture 41 in the *Agenda* asks Synod to adopt the following: "That the Synod of the CRC declare that with respect to members of fraternal organizations *each congregation, through its own consistory* [italics added] be entrusted with the essential responsibility of determining whether such persons become members of that congregation. Consistories are urged to exercise this essential responsibility of their calling by heeding carefully guidelines and conclusions of the synodically approved report on church membership and lodge membership."

As recently as 1977, Synod reiterated the historic position of the CRC "that any member of the lodge, by virtue of the oath he has taken, has at least tacitly identified himself with the false religion of the lodge and that therefore he cannot become a mem-

ber of the CRC unless he repudiates the religion of the lodge and repents of having taken the oath" (1977 Acts of Synod, p. 104).

The above position allows for no exceptions. How then can Richfield think that a consistory can do anything but exclude lodge members from church membership while "heeding carefully guidelines and conclusions of the synodically approved report on church membership and lodge membership"? By this time it should be abundantly clear that the CRC's historic position is squarely based on the bedrock of Scripture and is not to be adjusted according to any existential considerations. All attempts to make such unwarranted adjustments rightly call for another "battle for the Bible."

4. The Verhey Case — Last, but by no means least, among the issues that should occasion another "battle for the Bible" is the so-called Verhey case. It is precisely here that the lines ought to be most clearly drawn and that the basic issue should come most sharply into focus.

Dr. Allen Verhey is a minister in the CRC who, since his ordination in 1975, serves as Assistant Professor in Religion at Hope College in Holland, Michigan. On pages 561-566 we find an Appeal from the Consistory of the Dutton CRC against the decisions of Neland Avenue CRC and Classis Grand Rapids East concerning the Dr. Verhey matter, from which we quote the following excerpts:

"The Consistory of Dutton objected to the decision to ordain Dr. Allen D. Verhey after he had stated in his examination that he did not believe that the serpent spoke to Eve as reported in Genesis 3 and that he believed that the earthquake reported in Matthew 28:2 should be understood as an eschatological symbol and not necessarily as a fact . . .

"We are convinced that the position of Dr. Verhey does bring him into conflict with the confessions, and following the instructions of the Synod, have confronted him personally with our objections to his views. Discussion of the matter with him instead of removing our objections confirmed them. Therefore following 'the procedures outlined in the Form of Subscription and the Church Order' we brought our objections to the Neland Avenue Consistory which holds his ministerial credentials.

"The Neland Avenue Consistory, after a year had elapsed, informed us that it judged that the views to which we objected were permissible ways of interpreting the Bible. We were convinced that its reply, based mainly on Dr. Verhey's formal claims of respect for the Bible as God's Word, answered none of our objections to his method of 'interpreting' or using it. We therefore brought our objections to Classis Grand Rapids East. The Classis on January 8, 1979 adopted the recommendations of the majority of its study committee which endorsed and sustained the Neland Avenue Consistory's support and defense of the views of Dr. Verhey. Still convinced that these views are in conflict with the Bible and the Reformed Confessions, we therefore, following the direction of the Form of Subscription, Church Order, and the synod (Acts of Synod 1976, p. 95), bring these objections to the Synod of 1979 . . .

"Since these views (Dr. Verhey's) are in conflict with Scripture, our Confessions and Form of Subscription, and the decision of our synod, and their dissemination must be destructive of our Christian faith and life, we must appeal to you as the responsible church body to declare that this method of interpreting and using the Bible is not to be tolerated in the Christian Reformed Churches and to take whatever measures may be needed to prevent its being preached and taught by Dr. Verhey as a minister in our churches."

There is a cogency in Dutton's reasoning that should make it impossible to disregard. On the other hand, there are considerations in the case Neland Avenue seeks to make in their request that the charges against Dr. Verhey be dropped that make their case less convincing. Consider the following:

a. Although the Neland Avenue Consistory wants the charges against Dr. Verhey dropped, they want the following to be clearly understood: "As noted above, our judgment on these points *do not mean* that we agree with the specific interpretations Dr. Verhey has advanced . . ."

b. And, although Neland wants Dutton's charges dropped, they also say: "We believe that the discussion in the dissertation [Dr. Verhey's dissertation] is not pertinent to the original question of exegetical method in relation to the authority of Scripture. Therefore your committee *did not pursue* [italics added] this aspect of the Dutton protest further."

c. Moreover, although Neland wants the charges dropped, they do acknowledge "that Dr. Verhey's interpretations of these passages differ from that traditionally held in the CRC" and "that there continue to be issues worthy of discussion with respect to the interpretation of these passages."

d. And besides, although they want the charges dropped, Neland does feel called upon to include the following in their "pastoral advice" to Dr. Verhey:

(1) "that in suggesting interpretations which diverge from those widely held in the church *he should speak cautiously* [italics added], especially when his views might seem to threaten the fact-character and the event-character of the fall, the resurrection, and the specific contents of the word and deed ministry of our Lord."

(2) "... *we would caution Dr. Verhey* [italics added] against so emphasizing the revelational significance that it detracts from the 'event-basis' of the Christian faith. We do well to be reminded that we must avoid making an unwarranted division between an historical event and its revelational meaning (cf. Report 44. *Acts of Synod 1972*)."

Serving Dr. Verhey with this pastoral advice to exercise *caution* suggests that even in their own minds the Neland Avenue Consistory may have some misgivings about their attempt to refute Dutton's charges as being a black-and-white case. Such pastoral advice may leave others more convinced than ever that Dutton's charges should be sustained. May it be obvious to the delegates that in this case they are being summoned to rise up and acquit themselves like men in yet another "battle for the Bible"!

Corrections:

In our May issue the article on "What's Coming up at the CRC Synod?" contains a number of typographical errors which confuse the reader:

On page two near the bottom of the second column "mythological" should read "methodological".

Near the bottom of the third column on p. 3 "theories" appears instead of "theorists".

In the first paragraph on p. 5 "displaying" appears instead of "displacing."

And near the bottom of that same first column "readership" should be "leadership".

In the middle of the second column on p. 6 "De Bres" is misspelled.

Also in the second paragraph of the first column on p. 23 "may" should have appeared after "He" so that the phrase reads "He may also lead us. . . ."

Editor.

A VOICE OUT OF THE AUDIENCE

John Piersma

A day-long meeting was held recently in The Netherlands to discuss the subject, The Christian and Communism. Five excellent addresses were delivered, followed by open discussion periods. This comment came out of the audience:

"I speak here, of course, as a Christian, but I want you to know that I have not always fellowshiped in these kinds of circles. I am only a layman among all these men of scientific standing, but I have for years been the propaganda secretary of the Communist Party in The Netherlands.

"Where does the real danger of Marxism lie? Is it with the Communist Party, or the Socialist Party, or does it lie in our own ranks? Now I speak from personal experience. I used to talk with theologians as a communist about how we could best infiltrate and turn things around in the churches. I'd like today to pose this question: Isn't the danger more likely to be found in our own circles, so that we must take great care that we do not doubt the truthfulness of our foundation which is the Bible?

"I say this because you as theologian, or as preacher, or as a Christian did not convert me to Christianity. That happened when I began to read the Bible with the firm intention to prove to people that it was full of lies. The Bible then proved to me that I was a liar, and it did so by way of the great love which is therein expressed. I want to say today here that I still believe the Bible from cover to cover, and I want to ask of each one, Can you still say that? If you can then we do not need to arm ourselves over against the threat of Marxism for we are more than conquerors."



Christian Schools International Replies

Outlook Editor:

The March, 1979 issue of the *Outlook* contained an article by the Rev. Peter De Jong entitled "Are Christian Schools Teaching the Bible?" The article claims to present some of the observations of the author based on a critical comparison of two Bible curricula that we publish, the older Historical Study (in gr. 4-6, *My Bible Guides*) series and the Revelation-Response series. Since the article was very critical of the Revelation-Response curriculum, please permit us to respond. We are convinced that neither the Revelation-Response series nor the Historical Study series was evaluated fairly. We offer both, along with the Bible Study series, as meaningful choices for Christian educators. Our critical analysis of both curricula yields much different conclusions than those presented in the article of De Jong. We appreciate the opportunity to share our analysis and conclusions with your readers. We too shall focus primarily, as did De Jong, on the material for grades 4 through 6, although both curricula encompass grades K-9. Both curricula include the best materials currently available for Christian day school education in Bible.

Since De Jong's article assumes that the Revelation-Response series is "not designed to teach the Bible," a comparison of the contents of the newer material with the contents of the Historical Study series is most enlightening. A comparison of the two curricula reveals the following:

- a) The older *My Bible Guide* grade 4 covers the biblical stories contained in Genesis, Exodus, Numbers, Joshua, Judges, Ruth and 1 Samuel. The grade 5 material covers the stories in 2 Samuel, 1 & 2 Chronicles, 1 & 2 Kings, Jonah, select chapters from Isaiah and Jeremiah in connection with 2 Kings, Daniel 1-6, Esther, Ezra, and Nehemiah. The grade 6 material includes stories from the life of Jesus and from the Acts of the Apostles.
- b) The Revelation-Response grade 4 *God's Witnesses* covers the biblical

stories in Genesis, Exodus, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, Samuel, and the lives of Elijah and Elisha in 1 & 2 Kings. In addition grade 4 also studies the gospel passion narrative, Ephesians, Titus, Philemon, and Hebrews. Grade 5 *God's Kingdom* covers the lives of Saul, David and Solomon. (Similarly as *My Bible Guide* covers 1 & 2 Samuel and 1 Kings.) But grade 5 also includes units on Psalms, Proverbs, Amos, James, gospel stories, ascension stories and Acts of the Apostles. Grade 6, after a unit on Covenant, includes lessons on the prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Haggai, and Malachi, as well as on Esther, the gospels, Acts, Romans, Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon, and Revelation. Grades 5 and 6 review significant passages studied earlier. A complete analysis of the Bible passages studied in Revelation-Response is available on request so that readers can see for themselves that Revelation-Response is also designed to teach the Bible.

Which of the two curricula covers more of the Bible? The Historical Study series has one lesson each on Isaiah and Jeremiah, three on Daniel, and none on Ezekiel, Haggai, or Malachi. The Historical Study series for grades 4-6 does not cover the Psalms, the Proverbs, or the epistles. The Teacher's Manual of *My Bible Guide*, grade 6, p.9, states that "lack of space . . . accounts for the omission of lessons on the epistles in the pupil's manual and for their scanty treatment in the teacher's manual." On p. 189, it states, "It is impossible for the teacher to devote much time to the epistles, but at least have the pupils find these books in their Bibles and help the children understand that they are letters written by missionaries, usually to churches." When we designed the newer series we deliberately included more of the Bible, not less, in order to overcome this problem. The Revelation-Response material grades 4-6 not only covers most of the material found in the Historical Study series, grades 4-6, but also includes units on some of the epistles as well as on some of the prophets. We think that it is especially appropriate for us to point this out because De Jong's article comes to the conclusion that the newer series is "not designed to teach the Bible" and the implication is that the older series teaches much more of the Bible than does the Revelation-Response curriculum. However, as can be seen from the above comparison of content, this is simply not factual. Both series have served and continue to serve tens of thousands of God's children well, the older one for over 16 years and the newer one for half as long.

Are the Christian schools teaching the Bible? How does one judge? Some people might answer this question on the basis of the amount of Bible memorization required. We would grant that this may not be a conclusive criterion for judgment. Nevertheless, since it is an important factor, and since De Jong assumes that the Revelation-Response curriculum is not teaching the Bible while the Historical

Study curriculum does, we thought that a comparison of the minimal amount of Bible memorization in each curriculum might be interesting. We shall cite only our findings for grade 4, although the case is similar for grades 5 and 6. The minimal amount of Bible memorization in *My Bible Guide* grade 4 is listed as: names of the Old Testament books; Ten Commandments; Psalm 103; Matthew 11:28-30 and Romans 12:1-8. It is not related to lesson content. Bible memorization in the Revelation-Response curriculum is related to lesson content and the minimal amount of grade 4 material is listed as: Genesis 12:1-2 and 17:7-8; the Ten Commandments; Joshua 24:15; Ruth 1:16, 17; 1 Samuel 2:2; Psalm 8, 115:1-3, and 145:1-3; Isaiah 9:2 and 40:11; Matthew 16:16; Mark 10:45; John 15:12-14; Ephesians 5:1, 2; Philippians 2:8-11; Colossians 3:12-14; and Hebrews 1:1-2, 11:1-3, 6, 8, and 24-29. Does the older or newer Bible curriculum teach more of the Bible? On the basis of the minimal amount of Bible memorization listed in each the answer is clear. The Revelation-Response curriculum requires the student to know more of the Bible from memory than does the Historical Study curriculum (in the grades analyzed). Here too, we will be happy to send upon request a complete analysis of the required and optional memorization in the Revelation-Response curriculum so that the readers can see for themselves how much of the Bible is memorized by Revelation-Response students. (Readers can also use it to review their own memorization of significant Bible passages. For a recent article on our views about memorizing the Bible, read the curriculum column in the March, 1979 *Christian Home and School*.)

We all know that putting more of the Bible in the curriculum doesn't guarantee that students will learn more of it. But here too the evidence is contrary to Rev. De Jong's assumptions. Independently, the principals of two neighboring schools compared their results this year on a test of Bible comprehension given to their students at grades 5-9. In each grade level, Revelation-Response students scored significantly higher than the Historical Study students. Admittedly this is only one pair of schools and a larger study should be made.

At the heart of Rev. De Jong's analysis of the two curricula is the thought expressed in the opening paragraphs of his article:

The older series of books generally follows the chronological order and sets out to acquaint the student with Bible history. Emphasis falls on teaching the child to know the Bible, its contents, and message. Efforts are made to apply this content and message in a personal and practical way to the students' life.

The newer books are much more elaborate and colorful. The name "Revelation-Response" may suggest what is immediately apparent throughout the books, an emphasis on "Response." . . . the predominating emphasis is on the students' feelings and activities.

Our critical comparison of the two curricula reveals that attempts in the older series to apply "the content and message in

a personal and practical way to the students' life" are few. Apart from the personalized question which introduces the daily optional memory text in the *My Bible Guide* material there simply are not many explicit efforts to apply the biblical message. The student workbook concentrates on filling in blanks, choosing the right word, learning the correct spelling of biblical names, finding answers in the Bible, etc. This makes it easy for teachers and students to use. The Historical Study curriculum is mainly concerned with learning facts and the personal and practical application virtually drops out of sight. (Check, for example, the randomly selected lessons 40-45, pp. 131 ff. in the student workbook, grade 4.)

Recognizing this situation, at its 1969 annual meeting in Philadelphia the National Union of Christian Schools resolved to "take immediate steps to re-evaluate its present religion-theology program and course of study with the goal being to make the program more relevant with respect to the problems of our contemporary society so as to prepare our students for wise decision-making and consequent involvement in problem solving." Then in the spring of 1970 the Union's Board of Directors accepted a proposal to prepare a set of Bible curriculum materials "as an alternate to present NUCS Bible study guides, not to replace them"; and with a "basic organization . . . different from the present NUCS Bible study guides." They decided that "the curriculum should promote knowledge of the Scriptures and an understanding of the continuous interaction between the Scriptures and the whole developing Christian life of the pupil." Throughout the curriculum development we engaged the services of the best Christian artists in our community and used the optimum printing technology to reproduce their work.

The Revelation-Response curriculum encourages response. We consciously attempt to sensitize, not force, students to respond to God. In doing so, the curriculum attempts to make the personal and practical application of the biblical message much more explicit than the Historical Study material did. And in fact the Revelation-Response material is based on the premise that the biblical message demands response. Thus response is built into the curriculum — intellectual, decisional, and creative response. But to say, as De Jong does in his article, that "the predominate emphasis is on the students' feeling and activities" is both inaccurate and misleading. It is inaccurate because over 60% of the objectives in the Revelation-Response curriculum are intellectual. The predominate emphasis is therefore not on the students' feelings and activities but on knowing and understanding God's revelation. De Jong's statement is misleading because many of the activities designed for the students aim to increase knowledge and understanding of the Bible. They are not an end in themselves. They often presuppose or reinforce the intellectual content of the lesson. Moreover, we are not at all surprised that De Jong is able to find involvement-type activities, and even activities which are enjoyable. These are, of course, intentional. Our concern is, however, that your readers get the wrong

message from De Jong's compilation of examples in his article. For example De Jong states, "In a lesson in the Grade 6 teacher's manual a 'covenant celebration' is suggested featuring a 'covenant cake,' punch for 'wine,' crackers for bread, and hot-cross buns." To put this in perspective let's note that the grade 6 material has a 4 week unit on the *Covenant* which is centered around the following concept: "The basis of God's community is the divine covenant. The student studies the concept of covenant and how the old covenant is fulfilled in Christ. Students will appreciate how the covenant with God affects their covenant relationships in community" (p. 15 teacher's manual). There are 10 lessons in this unit which involve some rather in-depth and rigorous biblical study for 6th graders. The unit ends with a lesson on "Perfection of the Covenant" (the wedding of Christ and His Bride). The one activity which De Jong mentions is not in the lesson itself but simply a telling of what one teacher did with a class independently of the curriculum structure and as such is suggested as an optional culminating activity for the unit. How much more is contained in this unit which is completely ignored and overlooked in De Jong's critical analysis! It is unfortunate that your readers cannot see the full scope of the units. Instead they are introduced to only one suggested activity in a four week unit. The same is true of the example which De Jong cites from the *Grade 4 Teacher Guide* (p. 18, not p. 16) regarding "the Bread of Life." De Jong fails to mention that in this lesson (John 6), which is about Christ himself feeding 5000 people and talking about bread and its importance, and showing the connection with manna and how the Old Testament is being fulfilled; there is the telling of the story of Jesus as the Bread of Life; there is reflection on the audience responses to Jesus in John 6; there is reflection on types of responses of people today to Jesus as the Bread of Life; and there is opportunity for students to express their thoughts about this "I am" of Jesus. We ask the teacher to create empathy for those hungry people and their concern for bread. The one activity which De Jong cites from this lesson is listed as an optional ending to the lesson and is intended to add meaning for a class of students who do not know hunger. Although any tangible use of bread might unfortunately be misconstrued as infringing on the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, there is no intention here of a "hap-hazard caricature of the Lord's Supper."

When the activities suggested in the Revelation-Response material are seen in the perspective of the whole unit or even the specific lesson in which they are contained, it is difficult to agree with De Jong's conclusion that "the books ('student activity books') evidently embody the assumptions of some modern educationists and philosophers that students 'learn only by doing' and whatever they cannot handle and do is meaningless to them." On the basis of this judgment the Revelation-Response curriculum is then accused of carrying "such fallacious educational theories to ridiculous extremes." We trust that the material presented above shows your readers that the accusation is not correct. We believe that when the biblical con-

tent and message is applied in a personal and practical way to the whole developing life of Christian students, they will retain that message well. Our materials embody the assumptions of solid Reformed thinking throughout the ages.

Is the Revelation-Response curriculum "getting away from the Bible," as it is charged? The basis for this charge seems to be the fact that the grade 4 material includes some lessons on a Jewish celebration called "Hanukkah" and the grade 5 material has two units on "Kingdom Symbols." We do not agree that the units on Kingdom Symbols substantiate the charge. De Jong's assumption is that such units do not teach Bible. We would challenge that assumption. Since most of the symbols studied derive their meaning and significance from the Bible it is necessary for the student to know the background and the basic biblical material to appreciate and understand the symbols.

We agree that the study of Hanukkah in the fourth grade is extra-biblical. But one such example does not warrant the charges that the Revelation-Response material is "getting away from the Bible" and that the "search for interesting and different material sometimes carries them (the Revelation-Response books) far afield from the Bible, to the neglect of what the Bible does teach." We have already established the fact that the Revelation-Response series covers more of the Bible than the Historical Study series does at these grade levels. But we might also note that both curricula suggest that material other than the Bible be studied. In the Teachers' Manuals of the Historical Study series we state, "Sometimes the Bible period should be devoted to the study of missions" (grade 4 - p. 10, grade 5 - p. 17, grade 6 - p. 15). Teaching material other than the Bible is not in itself inappropriate and is not in itself "getting away from the Bible." We agree that the extra-biblical materials ought not crowd out the Bible teaching and are careful to limit them to those which are significant for understanding and applying the Word.

Furthermore, De Jong regrets that in the Revelation-Response material Malachi is dismissed with a single page (grade 6 Teachers Guide, p. 49). A critical comparison of Revelation-Response with Historical Study series shows that even with only one page devoted to Malachi, the Revelation-Response coverage far exceeds that of the Historical Study, which completely omits the study of this prophet.

We do not think either curriculum material is perfect. Some statements could undoubtedly be improved. We welcome suggestions for consideration when we reprint our materials. We have background materials and papers explaining the goals and focus of our Revelation-Response curriculum. We will gladly send them to people who request them. We are very serious about the Bible and we want our students both to understand and to appropriately respond to the message of God in the Bible.

When De Jong cites inaccuracies and errors in the Revelation-Response material he comes dangerously close to an unreformed dualism. For example, the Teachers' Manual, grade 6, reflects on Isaiah's observations on the way the people of Israel were living. De Jong objects to this

because it seems to be "humanistic" and "to completely obscure the revelation and action of God which characterized the preaching of God's people." We think that the reformed doctrine of organic inspiration prohibits one from making a dualistic either/or in the message of the prophets. Isaiah, and for example Paul, *observed* the life of God's people. They spoke to that situation, and to it they brought the Word of the Lord. The alternative, it would seem to us, is to maintain that the prophets walked around blindfolded and spoke what some voice told them while they were totally oblivious to the situation. We would consider this latter description of the prophet's activity to be unreformed.

De Jong cites one example of "downright heresy" in the Revelation-Response material, in the statement "through the incarnation God became a human person" (Teachers' Manual, p. xxv). Our wording is an attempt to paraphrase John 1:1, 14 concerning the Word which was God and which became flesh, and Philippians 2:6 concerning Jesus Christ, "who existing in the form of God . . . took the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of man." Certainly to say that Jesus was "perfect God and perfect man, of reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting" (Athanasian Creed, Art. 32) is to confess that the Son, who was and is God, became man. The Nicene creed's confession is "that our Lord Jesus Christ . . . very God or very God . . . for us and for our salvation . . . was incarnate . . . and was made man." If De Jong wants to call using "human person" as a synonym for the generic "man" or "flesh" heresy, there is no argument which is going to convince him otherwise.

Finally, when De Jong alleges that the Revelation-Response curriculum is "not designed to teach the Bible" we could weep. We detect a basic error in De Jong's charge, i.e., the assumption that the *only* way to teach Bible, or the *only* curriculum designed to do so, is the chronologically organized curriculum. But this is certainly not true. The Bible itself is not chronologically organized. For example Job lived at the time of Genesis, the Psalms were written at the time of 1 & 2 Samuel, nine of the epistles were written at the time of the Acts and most of them are not given in chronological sequence in the Bible. Many preachers preach from various texts in the Bible — not at all chronologically organized — yet we would not accuse them of not intending to preach the Bible! Both curricula are intended to teach more than the facts of Bible history, and both generally follow a chronological ordering of the material. Nonetheless, the readers will be interested to know that the Historical Study series takes the students through the Bible once every three years. The Revelation-Response series takes them through it once each year to see the chronological sequence more clearly and to emphasize the overall unity of the Scriptures. Then in grades 7-8, the Revelation-Response curriculum includes an in-depth formal study of redemption-history.

In connection with this charge we note that De Jong judges that the materials included in the Revelation-Response books were organized in rather random fashion and chosen according to the inclinations of

those who were planning the course. "Accordingly," says De Jong, "popular, even 'faddish' themes get emphasized. . . ." The Revelation-Response themes are God's Great Love, Covenant, Judgment and Hope, Salvation and Service, Creation and Providence, The Church, God's Witnesses, God's Kingdom, God's Community, Analysis of Revelation, Redemption-History, and Interpretation of Revelation. To say that these are faddish is irresponsible journalism. We want to state very emphatically that the materials were not chosen simply out of the inclinations of the planners and from the fads of the day. The Revelation-Response curriculum clearly spells out the "Criteria for Selection of Content" (cf., Teacher Guides, p. x). We invite you to read that section and will be happy to send a free copy on request. If you do read the criteria for selection, you will see that they are not the "presently faddish" or "personal whim" which De Jong superficially cites.

We wish to be corrected if we are wrong, and we hope that we are, but we read the concluding page of De Jong's critique as saying, by *implication* and *association*, that there is no room for God and His revelation in the Revelation-Response series. Moreover we find in the concluding paragraph a suggestion that the Revelation-Response curriculum is a departure from the Word of God. We consider this to be a wholly unwarranted charge — one not to be made nor taken lightly. We even read, what to us is incredible, the implication that the Revelation-Response curriculum is the work of the devil. (What else could be intended by the statement, "A look at some of these newer Bible manuals suggests that, in the words of our Lord, 'while men slept,' the 'enemy' has been sowing his 'tares' also in this field, Matt. 13:25"?) Such a charge is most unbecoming of a Christian brother. Such a charge calls for an apology to all the many devoted Christian people who worked hard and long to develop the new Bible curriculum and to many more who are working hard each day to use it effectively for the growth of God's children in Christ. Hundreds have told us how the Holy Spirit worked in their lives through this, admittedly imperfect, means.

We appreciate De Jong's support for the Historical Study series. It is a good series for those who want an academic, easy-to-use, historical study of the Bible. Many people share his view that its lack of art or color is a strength but others see it as a weakness. Such differences are legitimate and to be expected in a Christian community. De Jong's charges that we are "getting away from the Bible" and that Revelation-Response is "not designed to teach the Bible" are not factual. The facts are that in grade 4, the older series includes passages from seven Old Testament Books and the newer one from fifteen Old and eighteen New Testament Books. The old has thirty-three required plus forty-one optional memory verses while the new has fifty-two required plus one optional memory verse at this grade level. Revelation-Response requires more involvement by students and an independent comparison indicated that at least in two schools grades 5-9 Revelation-Response students retain more. The Revelation-

Response series is good for those who want to study more of the Bible than its history, to apply biblical teachings to more of the students' lives than the academic, and to commit considerable effort to the task. We have followed the mandate of our 1970 Board of Directors and we offer the schools a meaningful choice within a solid framework of Reformed Christianity.

Sincerely,
CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS
INTERNATIONAL
(formerly the National Union
of Christian Schools)

EDITOR'S RESPONSE

The interested reader is invited to read my article in the March *OUTLOOK* and then judge whether Christian Schools International in this letter answers the criticisms of its newer Bible curriculum.

In this letter the publisher of these materials cites evidence to show that the new Bible curriculum covers a lot of the Bible. Citing weaknesses of the older curriculum, it alleges that the newer one covers some sections of the Bible which the older did not and assigns more memory work. And it tries to show that users of the new material learn and retain more of the Bible than users of the older curriculum.

My article was not written hastily or thoughtlessly and did not arise out of ill-will. Over most of 40 years in the ministry I have been promoting and from time to time have been more directly involved in Christian schools, for a while as a board member and officer. The survey of these Bible curricula which I was asked to do for a local school was necessarily limited and dealt more extensively with the newer than with the older materials. My article did not deny that the newer materials in some way covered much of the Bible or that some of the lessons were well done. It observed, "at some points there is indication of careful Bible study and explanation (in introducing some of the psalms, for example)." It did not deny the efforts or devotion which went into producing or using these materials. It did not criticize them for using illustrations or a colorful format. And it did not say, as this letter makes it say that "there is no room for God and His revelation in the Revelation-Response series."

Let the reader observe that this letter from the publisher, despite all of the evidence which it cites in defense of its materials, does not answer the critical observations which I made about the way in which the Bible is treated in them:

- (1) The subjectivist approach in which the "response" tends to overshadow the "revelation."
- (2) Inaccuracies and errors, of which I cited a few obvious examples. (Charging me with "unreformed dualism" and maintaining "that the prophets walked around blindfolded" does not justify the textbook's statement that "The worship of the people did not make them God's chosen people because their worship was not from the heart.")

A reference to John 1:1, 14 and to Phil. 2:6 does not justify contradicting the carefully formulated doctrine of the Athanasian creed about the Person of Christ, in the statement "through the incarnation God became a human person.")

- (3) Organization of the curriculum neither around the order and organization of the Bible itself, nor around the teachings or doctrines of the Bible (as older catechisms did) but rather around more or less arbitrarily selected themes.
- (4) The indications of the influence of the "new hermeneutic" approach which is making inroads in our churches and which characterizes the viewpoint of some suggested reference materials as well as of some of the theological consultants.

Listing the wide range of Bible materials covered, as the letter does, shows nothing about the depth or accuracy of the coverage.

In Matthew 16 (as in the parallel gospels) we read that after Peter's wonderful confession of faith, the Lord not only commended him, but also had to proceed immediately to correct and warn him because of the devil's momentarily successful effort to nullify that confession. If the Lord had to warn the Apostle Peter against the devil's effort to mislead his preaching and teaching, why should anyone find it "incredible" that the devil could have anything to do with weaknesses or errors in our Bible teaching? To recognize that it is the devil who tries to mislead us in these

things by no means implies that we say that the work of our churches and schools is simply the work of the devil. It rather means that in obedience to the Lord we be alerted against the effort of the devil to hinder Christ's cause in our churches and schools, which are among his primary targets.

Let the reader read the criticisms of weaknesses in the curriculum and the publisher's defense of it. Better still, let each one begin to ask how the Bible is being taught to our children in our Christian schools. I believe that many of our readers, if they look into these Bible manuals will find many examples of the weaknesses which troubled me and which I cited in the *OUTLOOK* article. Perhaps parents or teachers among our readers may want to comment on this subject. More prayer, attention and effort directed toward our Christian schools may lead to their improvement; neglect will not.

THE DECISION TO ALLOW WOMEN DEACONS: PERMISSIVE OR MANDATORY?

In discussing with some friends the decision of Synod '78 re women deacons, an interesting comment came out. If the church order change is ratified as it stands (see p. 105, Acts 78) and Synod '79 does not make the determination that women deacons voting on Council violates man's headship, then the idea of *allowing female nominations will not be permissive but man-*

datory! Here's what I mean . . . If a woman seeks nomination but a particular Council (elders and deacons) turns her down and will not even bring her name up in the Council for possible nomination on the grounds that she is a woman, then she would have a legitimate reason (church order — wise) to call that Council to task before Classis, because *the permissive intent of the Synodical decision of '78 does not show up in the intended church order change.* Also, any Council stating refusal to allow female nominations, even if no one wished to make any, would automatically be in violation of church order for the same reason.

I personally would like to see a determination by Synod '79 that women voting in Council violates man's headship because in truth the Council and not the Consistory is the ruling body in our church government . . . but short of that the Synod *must* add to the proposed supplement — "and how this work is to be distinguished from that of elders in light of male (husband) headship is left to individual Councils."

If this addition (supplement to the proposed supplement) is not made and Synod '79 ratifies the changes as is (not taking a stand against women voting in Council) then the decision of Synod '78 as reflected in the revised church order would no longer be permissive but mandatory and Synod '79 would virtually be forcing the 30 or so churches and classes making appeal to be in violation of church order . . . an unwise move to say the least!

PAUL INGENERI
Grand Rapids, Michigan

reformed women speak

ROOTLESS SOULS

LAURIE VANDEN HEUVEL

Several months ago, in the aftermath of the Guyana carnage, a cartoon appeared in the *Los Angeles Times*. It featured a large human monster named CULTS. The monster held the Bible in one hand, the other hand clutching a number of strings attached to human puppets. The caption said, "Give me your rootless souls."

The *Times* magazine of Dec. 4, 1978 described the tragedy as "an appalling demonstration of the way in which a charismatic leader can bend the minds of his followers with a devilish blend of professed altruism and psychological tyranny." Whether or not it was the fault of the church for not giving these people the water of life or the fault of the people for rejecting the water, these are descriptions of a thirsty people drinking at cisterns "that hold no water." Daniel Morse writing in *The Presbyterian Guardian* of Dec., 1978 said, "Because we have not brought to them the water of life, they have re-

placed it with kool-aid and cyanide." This these people did in the belief that they were championing a just and righteous cause. We stand appalled at their twisted minds.

But Jim Jones is not alone in the treachery of warping people's minds and lives. Other organized movements are seeking to fill the vacuum in people's lives. Some are quasi-Christian cults; some are based on Eastern religious thought. But all attempt to brainwash and program their clients by means of phsyical pressures such as isolation, fatigue and tension, psychologically induced guilt or fear, overwhelming emotional conditioning and scriptural half truths and distortions of Scriptures.

One example of these is the American Unification Church, followers of the Reverend Moon. These people are frequent visitors to the communities in which we live. Many are clean-cut young people with winning smiles and warm gestures. They say they are selling this or that for a "Christian" cause, and will not we please support them? After a lengthy probe into the doctrine and life-style of one "Moonie" not long ago, we have now determined to question more thoroughly these followers of Moon. We try to show that they have no right to sail under the banner called "Christian" since they totally reject the cardinal doctrine of the Christian faith, the substitutionary blood-atonement of Jesus Christ. These people are dynamic and dangerous. Many are following them.

Mrs. Vanden Heuvel of Chino, California is editor of this department, *Reformed Women Speak*.

Transcendental Meditation is another opium being fed to restless souls under the guise of being an effective scientific technique for obtaining relaxation and increased creativity. It desensitizes conscience by diminishing the concept of guilt. It makes the mind and body passive and thereby open to false and demonic ideologies. It is a rigorous process of mental conditioning under the cloak of scientific and spiritual enlightenment. Many meditators hold important professional positions in education, government, business, medicine, entertainment, media, sports and religion.

A similar movement is the Erhard Seminar Training (EST). EST seeks to reduce tension and induce peace by obscuring the *objective reality* of the Christian world and life view and championing the autonomy of man.

In addition to organized movements of mind-benders, there are many false ideologies which clamor for the minds of men. Evolution is one of these. It has successfully dominated the entire public school system of this country under the guise of a "neutral" approach to the origins of life. Its influence can be felt in the "cheapness" of life we see reflected in abortion, euthanasia and the violence and murder communicated in movies and television, evils to which even many Christians have become almost indifferent.

Then there are the deadly "isms": "Communism" with its more gentle and plausible forerunner called "socialism" paving its way; "materialism", causing millions to exchange family unity and spiritual growth for the "mess of pottage" called material success; "secularism" trying to divorce God from education, entertainment, communications and many more areas of life.

The multiplying of errors does not stop here. It has even invaded the orthodox Christian church. The undermining of confidence in the Scriptures in the leadership of denominations has worked itself down to the church members like a cancer, sometimes the "slow" kind and sometimes the "fast" kind, but cancer nonetheless. Today church pews are empty, men's fancies have replaced "thus saith the Lord!" and people by the thousands are groping for meaning to their existence and direction for their pressured lives. In desperation they turn to mystical religions or to the deadly "isms" which offer them love and security. Thus the circle of degeneration is completed.

Rootless souls! Let us never think that spiritual uprooting does not threaten our homes. Doubt and disobedience are among us too. The only way we can survive, yes, even blossom and grow spiritually is to sink our roots and the roots of our children deeply into the revealed will of God.

How can we do this? We take a simple lesson from nature. When we plant seeds in the springtime, we *prepare the soil*. We refine it and *enrich* it with nutrients that will give our seeds everything they need to grow up into sturdy productive plants. We must use the same procedure in spiritual living. When we bring little ones into this world, we must be very sure that the soil, the environment, into which we place those children, is rich and refined.

We provide these seedlings with nutrients which will *build* them. We *purge* the soil and the plants of all foreign influences which will harm or destroy them.

Our *homes* are the first and most influential soil into which our children are placed. We must surround them with conversation which will build them spiritually. We must *demonstrate consistent Christian behavior* ourselves so that our practice matches our principles. We must *avoid* practices which may cause the children to stumble in later life. We must *refine* the atmosphere of our homes by careful selection of the radio and television programs and wise judgment in the use of time to be spent in watching or listening to them. We must build relationships with our children which promote love, family unity and continuing open communications.

We must make sure that the soil of our *church* which surrounds our children is preaching of the whole counsel of God, of exposing sin as well as showing love. We must insure that our church is teaching faithfully the full-orbed message of the Scriptures — the mighty acts of God in the *history* of revelation as well as the *doctrines* of the Scriptures. These are essential to the development of strong spiritual roots and sturdy plants. We must make sure that we support the educational programs of the church. If we show by any word or gesture that we are impatient with catechism classes or Sunday School, that we think it is a burden to take the children or wait for them, if we indicate an impatience with memory work or written work, the impact of the instruction, no matter how good the teacher, will be *lost* on the child.

We must be equally sure that the soil of the *school* which our children attend *nourishes* them with a sound curriculum and standards of moral excellence. In order to insure this and contribute toward it, we must make it our business to become involved in the life of the school as well as the church. Some parents believe they do their children a favor by always staying home and never attending PTA, conferences, school programs, church programs and Bible study groups in the church. Actually they are short-changing their children in two ways: 1.) They are setting an example of *non-involvement* in church and Christian school affairs which affect their own children in years to come so that their children will also be *passive observers* instead of *active workers* in Kingdom activity; 2.) Parents who bypass the opportunities to *grow* spiritually which are offered by church and school, are depriving themselves of important *input* which they as parents need in the tremendous *output* demands which are made upon them as parents. If they are to *feed* their young plants, they must first *receive* so that they will have something substantial to *give*.

Plants in the garden of our homes also need constant *pruning*. We must say "no" sometimes and say it *firmly* and *stick to it*. This needs emphasis today. There are far too many children and young people running parents instead of parents ruling children. The effects are showing. Discipline is painful for the moment but "in the end it profiteth."

With the indispensable help of God, Christian parents who pray and work diligently to provide rich, refined soil and nutrients for their children, have equipped them to stand firm when the heat of temptation and lure of the world is upon them. In this day of mass communications and the ease of world travel, we cannot *isolate* our children. But we can and must *insulate* them for the rigors of Christian living which lie ahead. In our baptismal vows we promise as parents to instruct our children and cause them to be instructed *to the utmost of our power*. That takes work. That takes agonizing intercession. But with God's blessing, it produces *rooted souls*. ●

OUR QUESTION



"Congregational Meetings On Sunday?"

Harlan Vanden Einde

From a reader in the Eastern part of the States comes a question pertaining to the propriety of holding annual congregation meetings on Sunday. The reference is to the regular business meetings, at which time budgets are adopted and duties of committees are discussed and determined, etc., and not just to the special times when a pastor is extended a call. "We feel that conducting business meetings of any kind on the sabbath is improper use of the Lord's Day . . . People who love their church should surely be able to come to a week night meeting once a year whether it is convenient or not," comments the author of this question.

I would begin by saying that I agree with my correspondent that it is inappropriate to hold the annual congregational meeting on Sunday. Realizing that there are those who will disagree with that forthright statement, let me explain why I take that position.

I do not promote a pharisaical idea of the Lord's Day, by which I mean that we ought not to be governed by a whole list of don'ts and negatives. It's very easy to fall into the trap of conducting ourselves by a set of rigid rules, where the rules become more important than the idea or concept they are intended to promote and preserve. God expressed His will for us when He inscribed that tablet of stone with His finger: "Remember the sabbath day to keep it holy." Obviously God intended that day to be different from the other six, not because something which is "right" on the other six days becomes "sinful" on the sabbath, but because He put a special claim on that one day in distinction from the other six.

So what is to happen on the sabbath day? It is a day for worship. It is a day in which we are invited to enter into and enjoy the blessed fruits and benefits of Christ's redemptive work. God is to be praised, and His people are to be inspired and challenged and refreshed spiritually for their walk and work in life. We are not to think of ourselves as isolated segments of saved people, but as parts of a body, having been ingrafted into Him as a branch into a vine, all dependent on Him for our life and interdependent on one another. Thus we enjoy the communion of the saints in the fellowship of the body as we worship. And in order that we may fulfill God's purpose for that day, we have to set aside the work in which we are normally engaged during the week.

Now I suspect that those who would promote the appropriateness of the annual congregational meeting on Sunday afternoon would justify it by saying that it is "spiritual" work, or it is "kingdom" business. Very true! But for the Christian, is it not so that all his work is "kingdom" business, and that none of it may be divorced from his "spiritual" life? And in that light, could we not "legitimatize" any kind of work by the Christian on Sunday?

By the same token, there is "business" to be conducted at an annual congregational meeting, which, though it surely relates to "spiritual" things, is not that much different than the operation of any other business. There are likely to be discussions about salaries for the pastor and custodian, monies to be spent for buildings and repairs and maintenance, and the like. Does the conducting of such business fit into the spirit and intent of the Lord's Day? I think not. If it does, then what is to prevent any Christian business man from holding his annual corporation meeting on a Sunday afternoon? For he is also dealing with the Lord's time and money and possessions, and the matter of responsible Christian stewardship towards his employees.

Jesus did not oppose the works of mercy on the Lord's Day (Matt. 12:1-14, Luke 14:1-6); but He did say that "the sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath: so that the Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath" (Mark 2:27). In other words, man was made first, and then the sabbath. And in his commentary on this passage, Hendriksen writes: "The sabbath was instituted to be a blessing for man: to keep him healthy, to make him helpful, hence happy, to render him holy, so that he might calmly meditate on the works of his Maker, might 'delight himself in Jehovah' (Is. 58:13,14), and look forward with joyful anticipation to the sabbath rest that remains for the people of God (Heb. 4:9)", (The Gospel Of Mark, p. 108).

Let each church and consistory examine its own conscience with regard to this matter, but as I see it, to hold our annual congregational meetings on the Lord's Day is to detract from the spirit and idea of the day, and can only serve to lead us on a path onto which we will someday wish we had never entered. Let the day be free from "administrative" and "business" decisions, and let us call it "a delight, and the holy of the Lord honorable . . ." (Is. 58:13). ●

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Rev. Fred Gunnink

Recently a special Sunday was observed throughout the denomination. Christian Schools International provided bulletin covers, the *BANNER* had a complete issue devoted to Christian Education and the *OUTLOOK* carried a couple of articles concerning the Reformed emphasis of Christian education.

I'm sure that most of us appreciate a special emphasis on Christian education. It is something that is very near to our hearts. Probably most of us have had the privilege of going through a Christian school and all of us are aware of the sacrifices many people make in order to provide that kind of education for our children.

Waning Support

And yet, this general support of Christian schools is becoming questionable. It seems that the pressure of inflation as well as the search after financial security causes many to look at Christian education as an option, rather than a responsibility. One of the first things they consider in order to alleviate the financial burden is to drop the Christian school.

Many people appear to have taken Christian education for granted and to have defined it too narrowly. Since the Christian school is an extension of the Christian home they conclude that it is up to the schools to see to it that our children receive the kind of education they think is best for our children.

Many parents don't have the slightest idea of what is taught in Christian schools. They are aware of the basics that are taught in grade school. They make their yearly trip to the school to see the project their children have been working on. On occasion they even attend PTA, and when some special, interesting program is put on by the school, they attend. But how much interest is there in what our children are being taught in the Christian school?

Especially when it comes to Junior High or Senior High, where the emphasis changes somewhat and where our children are more exposed to the "real world out there," I wonder if we really know what is going on. Have we concluded that our schools, having done a great job in the past, may be expected to do the same in the future?

Christian education is much broader than the Christian school. It is a fact that the Christian school is an extension of the Christian home. But many of us have turned the task of the home over to the school and are not personally involved in the real, basic education of our children. With all the busyness of society today, we have been neglecting

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our responsibilities to our children in the home. Because they will be attending a Christian school in later life, we often neglect our duty in these formative years when we can be of great influence on our children.

After they are finished with the Christian high school, we absolve ourselves of further responsibility. We've done our part of the job, we claim; we have sacrificed all these years. Now they are able to stand on their own two feet. We let out a sigh of relief, thinking that now we can live a little more comfortably.

The Basic Question: Faithfulness to God's Word

I wonder if we as parents have the right kind of interest in Christian education? Do we, as parents, know what is taught in our Christian schools, and are we sure that it meets the approval of God's Word?

Are our Christian grade and high schools, or even our Christian colleges, the kind of covenantal schools they were established to be? Or has the practical side of life received more emphasis in recent years? Are we still really concerned about our children receiving the kind of Christ-centered education that we want them to have? Is it the case, as Rev. Peter De Jong recently stated in an article in the *OUTLOOK*, that there is more emphasis on response than revelation?

The question we have to confront is a serious one. The question is not first of all; Are our children trained so that they can take their place in this world? The question is; Are they being trained, nurtured and instructed in the ways of the Lord? Are they being taught the Lordship of Christ over all of life, or are they being instructed in such a way that the antithesis is lost? Are they being trained as soldiers of the cross and followers of the Lamb? Or are they being fed liberation theology and neoorthodox subjectivism?

As parents we ought to take a serious look at our Christian schools and find out just what is going on. We are not dealing here with an institution that is preparing our children only for this life; we are dealing with an institution that is preparing our children, along with the home and church, for eternity. We have a responsibility before God toward our children and we will have to give an account for what we have done with them.

Why this great concern? Our children are the church of tomorrow, and our church will only be as strong as our children will be when they take their place within the church.

Presently the Christian Reformed Church is at a crossroad. There are issues confronting the church that cannot be ignored any longer. Regardless of what position the Synod of 1979 may take, if it rescinds the action of Synod 1978 regarding Women in Ecclesiastical Office, or if it ratifies the change in the Church Order, that isn't going to answer the main question at all.

The question is; Are we going to be obedient to God's Word, or are we trying to find a number of ways to get around the authority of that Word? The

authority of God's Word has nothing to do with man's understanding or scholarship. God's Word is authoritative because God speaks to His people in His Word, and no hermeneutical gerrymandering can do away with that.

There is a growing secularism in our society that has made inroads into the church and the home, as well as the school. We must continually fight against the antichristian spirit that is as large. And as parents we better make absolutely sure that the instruction our children receive is not stained "with ideas, theories or methods inconsonant with the Holy Scriptures." We have to make sure that those who are instructing our covenant children have a complete commitment to the absolute authority of the Word of God and the confessions of the Christian Reformed Church.

Teacher Training

This then also means that we ought to look beyond our grade and high schools. What are our teachers being taught? Is full commitment to God's Word also taught in our institutions of higher education? How responsive are the Christian colleges of our denomination to the needs and desires of the denomination? I wonder about that in the light of a recent decision by the Board of Trustees of Calvin College and Seminary concerning the matter of social dancing. The churches were requested to respond to the Board regarding the issue. Of the responses received 85% were negative, and yet the Board decided to ask the Synod for a study committee, since they were not convinced that the responses adequately reflected the desires of the people. Frankly, that frightens me.

At a recent meeting in which the President of the College met with a number of ministers from our Classis it was stated that the Fine Arts Department of Calvin has been developing at a tremendous rate. That Department is especially involved with the training of our Christian school teachers. I wonder what is meant with the development of the department. Are modern theories and growing secularization making inroads there? That seems to be happening when college professors write movie reviews in the *BANNER*, when the "liturgy of dance" is taught and promoted, when the contents of "Report 44" are used as the core material, and when social dancing is advocated.

And then when it was stated that many recent graduates are filling teaching positions in Christian schools, I wonder about the influences exerted upon our children. I realize not all the students will accept "hook, line and sinker" what they hear. But at the same time every parent is aware of the tremendous influence teachers have over our children.

I recognize that not all who are receiving this kind of instruction will give in to the indoctrination received in these courses. Neither does everything that is advocated at the college level filter down to the Christian grade and high schools. But it stands to reason that a large part of it is passed on, with the result that many of our students are exposed to a type of instruction that does not meet with the approval of the Christian home.

The antithesis is lost. Children and young people are being taught that being in the world means being part of the world. The movement to world-accommodation is in high gear. There is only one way in which this trend can be reversed. Only when we return to acknowledging and obeying the authority of God's Word, the faith of our fathers, can this be done.

Our church is only as strong as her total commitment to the Scriptures. It is only by sovereign grace that we can stand against the wiles of the devil. And so we must not only pray, but we must also work that the purity of the Word of God may be preserved in our faith and life. Let us be busily engaged in the instruction of our children, beginning at home, in the church and also in the Christian schools. Let us make sure that our children are receiving the kind of instruction that will prepare them to be of service to the King of Kings in all of life. Let us instruct them in the Word of God, that they may know His ways, and then by God's grace, they will be ready, able and willing to follow the Master in all of life, guided by His Word and Spirit. ●

53RD CONFERENCE ON REFORMED EVANGELISM

Mr. and Mrs. Kasjen Tebben

"Jesus Christ is Lord" based on Philippians 2:9-11, was the theme of the 53rd annual Conference on Reformed Evangelism. The two-day conference was held in the beautiful facilities of the Calvin College Campus of Grand Rapids, Michigan on April 3 and 4. About three hundred people registered.

Mr. Ken Navis, president, led in a song service and extended a warm welcome to the conferees. Pastor Willard Willink emphasized the importance of prayer and directed the conferees to small groups to ask the Lord's blessing on the conference. Dr. Matthews, professor of Systematic Theology and Apologetics at the Grand Rapids Baptist Seminary, Rev. John DeVries, pastor of Highland Hills Christian Reformed Church and Dr. Leonard Greenway, director of the Pastoral Counseling Center of the Highland Hills Christian Reformed Church were the speakers.

Dr. Matthews was a man well qualified to speak on Evangelism. He shared with us that he was brought into the church by Evangelism. In his Bible Study he said that the great Biblical principle is that

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a person is called by the gospel through people. God gave us this great command. As persons we are God's temples, as office bearers, we are God's prophets, building His Church. He stressed that this is not only the work of the minister but of every individual member. We must begin where we are by giving our testimony, to get them into the word, encourage them, point them to the Savior, be good stewards and be good examples of the grace of God. We are without excuse because God has provided us with the Holy Spirit to guide us.

The "Paradise Building Business" was Rev. John DeVries's theme at the mass meeting on Tuesday evening. He read Psalm 126 with special focus on verses 5 and 6 where it says that those who sow in tears shall reap in joy. He gave us the following questions and answers: What is the church? The church is a community of love. A new commandment I give you that you love one another. If you love one another, then everyone will know that you are my disciple. What is a layman? He is not just a recipient but has a full time profession in "The Paradise Building Business" equipped with the Holy Spirit. What is a pastor? He is a coach to prepare God's people for service to build up the body of Christ. What is the structure? To be more effective, the large church should be divided into little churches to give individual members a chance to grow.

On Wednesday evening at the mass meeting, we were again challenged and inspired by one of God's servants, Dr. Leonard Greenway. He used as his theme, "The Effectiveness of God's Word," based on Isaiah 55:10,11. The Lord gave this word and it will accomplish what it has set out to do. The effectiveness is found in its divine origin and is declared in the divine promise. God knows what is best to save the sinner and the Almighty God is the one that redeems the sinner. This gospel shall be preached to all the world, and then comes the end. The word of God shall be beaten and battered but it shall rise again. We are God's people and with God's Word in our hand we shall have the victory.

Thirteen seminars were given twice each day by capable church leaders. They were willing to share with others the problems, methods and frustrations of kingdom work and how to cope with them. Above all they expressed the joy and privilege that we have to work for the Lord in special ways. Each seminar had a question and answer period in which we could learn to make the situations relevant to our own local churches.

Mr. Mel VerWys was our song leader. Our Conference theme song was "He is Lord". Mr. VerWys also introduced the special music. Their contributions gave a joyful and inspirational note to the meetings.

We are sure that we speak for everyone that attended the conference, that it was good for us to have been there. We are inspired and challenged that there is a task that God has given to each one of us. The Gospel must go forth in all of its fullness.

An invitation extended by a group from the Wisconsin Churches was accepted for next years conference. It will be held at the Green Lake Bible Camp April 22-24, 1980. ●

PASSING THROUGH

Isa. 43:1-5

*When thou passest through the waters
And thy heart is troubled so;
Fear thou not, for I am with thee,
They shall never overflow.*

*When thou walkest through the fire
Then no flame shall hinder thee:
For I am the Lord, thy Savior,
Thou art precious unto me.*

*Through the fire and the waters
Step by step and day by day:
Fear thou not, for I am with thee—
I will lead thee all the way.*

Annetta Jansen
Dorr, Michigan

USE ME, LORD

*Whatever talent, Lord, I have,
May it be used for Thee;
A spoken word, a cheery smile,
A song of melody.*

*A whispered prayer, a kindly deed,
To help along the way;
O use me in Thy service, Lord,
For this I humbly pray.*

Annetta Jansen
1969 - 142nd Avenue
Dorr, Michigan 49323

GRIEVE NOT THE SPIRIT

REV. JOHN BLANKESPOOR

**And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God,
with whom you were sealed for the day of
redemption.** Ephesians 4:30

The Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Pentecost, can be grieved. He can also be quenched, says Paul in another place. And Stephen, in his defense, accuses the unbelieving Jews of always resisting the Spirit. We may add to all of this, Who of God's children does not resist, grieve or quench the Spirit? This is terrible, but it is true.

On the other hand, our Church Fathers have maintained, very emphatically, that the work of the Spirit is irresistible. This, no doubt, means that God's work is not frustrated by man. Instead that God always performs His good pleasure, saves whom He wills and that His work in the deepest sense always progresses. Someone once said that we could better speak of the invincibility of the Spirit. This word expresses the thought of the Spirit being unconquerable. The work of man can never overcome the work of the Spirit.

But when the Scriptures speak of grieving, quenching and resisting the Spirit they have reference to man's disobedience to God's revealed will, the will of His command. In many ways every Christian disobeys the Lord every day. This grieves the Spirit, makes Him sad. But when the Word speaks of the one work of salvation of the Almighty Sovereign God, then it also speaks of God's work being irresistible, invincible. This does not merely mean that God saves His people in spite of their sins and grievings of the Spirit, although this is also true. It means that God *always* works with invincibility; nothing ever hinders Him. On the contrary, everything in the deepest sense serves His purposes, also the works of the devil. God always progresses, never retrogresses. The Lord so controls all things in our lives, that even so terrible a sin as that of David with Bathsheba was made to be for David an advancement in the school of life. He learned of the riches of God's forgiving grace with this unforgettable experience, as he had never known it before.

Here Paul is speaking of the grieving of the Holy Spirit that was poured out on Pentecost. Notice the context of these words. Paul says that we must seek to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one Lord, one faith and one baptism for all His people. We must put on the new self. We must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to our neighbors. "In your anger do not sin." And do not give the devil even a foothold. No unwholesome talk should come from our mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs. It

is in the context of this kind of admonition to Christian living that he says, "And do not grieve the Spirit."

It is very important for a clear understanding of the text, to see that Paul adds to this admonition, "With whom you were sealed for the day of redemption." What does that have to do with grieving the Spirit? Really a whole lot.

Why would the Holy Spirit seal us and give us the assurance of "making it all the way"? To seal means to make sure, to guarantee promises. Why does the Spirit give us such promises? Give such promises to people like we are, Christians but often still such big sinners? How can He possibly give us such assurances in the light of the fact that we are often unfaithful, earthly-minded, even carnally-minded in many ways? There is only one answer. He loves us so much, in Christ. His love is infinite, ocean deep, and everlasting. In that love He leads His people in the way of sanctification, He keeps them as sheep in the midst of the hungry wolves, the devils. No earthly love even that of a mother can be compared with it. And every Christian when he reaches "the shore" on the other side of the "Jordan of death" will have to give credit for his arrival only to the love of God.

When we sin we grieve this God with our sins. We sin against His grace. And provoke Him to His face. And so He says to us in and through the Word, Don't grieve me with disobedience and sin. Instead, do what is pleasing to the Lord, in walking in faith and obedience.

The unchangeable God, whose counsel stands, can also become sorrowful and sad. God is not just a cold abstract Being, in no way being affected by the deeds of men and of His dear children. Isn't God's wrath and terrible anger also a revelation of His "passion"? God surely has feelings. Isn't it Isaiah the prophet who tells us that in all the afflictions of Israel God was afflicted. He also sympathizes with His people. Doesn't Ps. 78 tell us that Israel often provoked God in the wilderness, and grieved Him in His heart? In the same manner the sins of His people grieve the Spirit.

Paul here takes a tender, passionate approach. He means to say, "The Spirit loves you as God's dear children. He loves you so much that He will never, never let you go."

Think of the example of parents. When we were small children they loved us dearly. Only we didn't often realize it, or show appreciation. But when we grow up and become parents ourselves, we reflect more upon the love of our parents in times past. We see how they loved us always, and think how we often sinned against them, while they loved us. Remembering this grieves us now, and we try not to grieve them further.

Think of the incredible love of God. No words can describe it, and no mind can comprehend it. Therefore grieve not the Spirit of your Father by walking in sin. Let not the sun go down upon your wrath. Seek the unity of God's people in the bond of peace. Let no unwholesome talk come from your lips. Give heed to all his tender exhortations and warnings.

Apply this to yourself in your own particular fail-ures and daily weaknesses.

As we give heed to His words, He assures us of His comfort and nearness. And we will have peace in our hearts, the peace that surpasses all understanding, the peace of the very Spirit of God.

Therefore, don't grieve Him, but do what is pleas-ing to Him. ●

THE PREDICAMENT OF A CONSERVATIVE

JOHN J. BYKER

It is difficult to give an appropriate title to this article. The designation "conservative" is generally accepted and in a general way better understood than more suitable terms. If there were a consensus as to the meaning of terms such as reformed, calvinistic, confessional and historic faith, these would be preferable. Lamentably, the philosophical dialectic of this age has deprived us of an antithesis and rendered these and many other terms nearly use-less for conversation.

Meaningful discussion is hindered by the neces-sity of first making distinctions and definitions. After the distinctions are made the response is often still "You don't understand," or there is no time left to discuss issues.

What Is A Conservative?

A brief description of my understanding of a con-servative may prove helpful here. A conservative is a person who wants to conserve the heritage God has given us through the fathers. He believes that God is true to His promise, that He will lead His church into all truth — that conviction is to be con-served. The confessions of the church are to be con-served as living confessions for all of life and they must stand under the criticism of the greater standard, the Word, or the Bible. It must be em-phasized that criticism of these confessions must be adequately proved to the church before they receive any acceptance. The *Biblical traditions* of the fathers are to be conserved, not simply because they are traditions, but because God has told us to grow in this way. Conservatives do, however, recognize that traditions always remain open to the criticism of the Scriptures. The basic intent of a conservative is simple adherence to the Word of God in faith; to share with the Apostle Paul, as we have learned from the Spirit speaking through him, the desire to shun the wisdom of men.

Compelled To Be Negative

In light of that description, I believe the vast ma-jority of those who consider themselves conserv-ative see their predicament as being against, or reacting to, a number of decisions and practices which have come into vogue in the last couple of decades. However, I fear the conservative often has little idea of what he stands *for*. This may partially explain the fact that he seems to seek a certain relief in repetitious complaint.

To be sure, the conservative has cause for grief and reaction. A cursory listing of some decisions and practices may substantiate this fact. The blatant ec-clesiastical politics practiced at major assemblies was epitomized at the Synod of 1978 where it was decided that women could be ordained to the office of deacon and the Church Order was altered on the spot to fit the decision; the de facto ecumenism prac-ticed; the secular and psychological approach to homosexuality; the indefinable position on divorce and remarriage; the acceptance of the new herme-neutic by ministers and professors; the non-stand on limited atonement; the vacillating approach to and outright denial of the confessions; a use of the Form of Subscription which now places every position and stand of the church open to question; the worldly standard of entertainment and the secular guidance in societal affairs; these and more issues place the faith of a conservative in jeopardy. To this he legitimately reacts.

The Role of "Report 44"

It is at this point where most conservatives close their eyes. *Every one of these decisions and prac-tices mentioned are perfectly legitimate in light of the churches' stand on the "Nature and Extent of Biblical Authority," popularly known as Report 44.* I am amazed that we can be so blind to this fact. I would have no difficulty with any of the churches' stands on these various issues if I accepted Report 44. This report could not and would not have been written without modern theology, its mother. For your reference, the doctrinal, political and practical decline of the church has been documented by the Association of Christian Reformed Laymen and com-piled in a recently published *Handbook of Christian Reformed Church Issues*.

Failure to Recognize the Antithesis of Liberal to Conservative

While all these issues demand a response, they do not in themselves constitute the predicament of the conservative. I believe that we are invariably giving the wrong response due to a faulty concep-tion of conservatism. Perhaps we can best think of this concretely in the context of the "liberal/conservative" controversy with which we are familiar. To do that let me briefly describe the modern day liberal. The common and basic element which unites all theological liberals is a broadened view of the word of God. Liberals may disagree (even violently) on a number of issues but they are all agreed that the Bible is not the *only* word of God.

Report 44 makes that very simple matter extremely complex. Historically, in discussions of the Nature and Extent of Biblical Authority, it was simply stated — its nature is divine and its extent is total. Report 44 introduces a host of qualifications which negate that simple concept. One illustration may suffice to point this out: when Dr. A. Verhey denied that the serpent spoke to Eve and called into question the historicity (fact) of the earthquake at Christ's resurrection, the Neland Ave. C.R.C. consistory upheld him. One of the reasons they gave for their action was that he (Verhey) was in harmony with the doctrinal deliverances of Synod, specifically Report 44.

It is at this point that the conservative dilemma becomes apparent, for conservatives essentially, though unconsciously, think in a similar fashion. Let us picture the "liberal/conservative" controversy thus:

Conservative
 Traditionalist
 Institutional
 Evangelical
 Neo-Evangelical
 Moderate
 Biblicist
 Fence-sitter
 Liberal

At the top of this slanting line are the conservatives, and at the bottom are the liberals. You will notice that they are all on one line. However, in between these two extremes you have many different kinds of — what shall we call them? — conservative/liberal groups. There are, for example, the traditionalists; people who want to keep things the way they are just because they always were that way. Next, there are what is likely the largest group in the Christian Reformed Church, the institutionalists; people who worship the institution. Then come evangelicals, the neo-evangelicals, the moderates, the Biblicists, and don't forget the fence sitters. And then there is a group who look over the church's membership and say "Ahhh . . . there is the silent majority — if only that silent majority would speak."

Wherever one fits on that line, he is still on the same line. Each group on that line has basically the same approach to the truth. Or, said another way, somewhere these groups can meet each other on that line and hold dialogue. A good example appears in the protests raised against women in ecclesiastical office. In practice it works like this — the liberal presents his position, the conservative reacts — because he is at the other end of the line. It has become a wearying continual action/reaction exhibition. The trouble with this is that the conservative fights the battle on the liberal's terms. Why else do not conservatives approach the Verhey controversy, or one of many other examples which could be cited as antithetical positions dealing with the approach to truth, or with the "Nature and Extent of Biblical Authority?"

A correct description of the liberal/conservative controversy should rather be pictured as follows:

Nature and Extent
 of Biblical Authority

Liberal Conservative

Report
 44

Not only does failure to recognize the antithesis in the two positions create the predicament of the conservative, but it is also the reason we are caught in the liberal/conservative, action/reaction syndrome of the past two decades.

Liberal and Conservative Theology Cannot Be Harmonized

With the slanting line concept of the problematics we are constantly in dialogue with the liberals. In reality the similarities between liberals and conservatives are superficial. True, liberals say "don't be separated by theology," but conservatives, if they would maintain their faith, must separate from error.

Liberal theology is not biblical and does not represent historic Christianity. It should not bear the name Christian. It is sinful man's endeavor to determine what part of the Bible is palatable to him.

The diagram shows two opposing arrows. The antithesis between the two positions has become increasingly apparent in the more recent controversies and becomes concrete in the decision on women in office. It is indispensable that we be willing to recognize our problem and begin to act on that basis. If we refuse to do so, we should stop our endless complaining or ask if we truly desire to be conservative. True conservatives and liberals stand on different or opposite foundations that cannot be synthesized. Those in our circles who are classified as liberals are active, capable, determined, effective and vocal. They have kept the church in a state of turmoil for twenty years. Unless the current conservatism is dissolved by the accelerating attrition, the same can be predicted for the future.

We Must Recognize the Antithesis

Until conservatives reexamine or reevaluate their approach there will be nothing they presently hold as precious, conserved. It is this non-antithetical mentality of the conservative that has produced his predicament. Some have said that it is the intellectual dishonesty and politics of the liberals which have created the problem. To be sure, I believe there has been and is a vast amount of such dishonesty and politics, which make liberalism difficult to recognize and deal with. But basically, the predicament is caused and perpetuated by the non-antithetical liberal/conservative mentality.

The adherents of liberal theology have become bold. For a time they exercised considerable caution, all of which they have now thrown to the wind. Protests or appeals against decisions and practices are ignored or politically neutralized. Although it is

not possible to detect the antithesis in each issue, there should be no doubt of its existence in our approach to the truth as the basis for decision making. When conservatives see Report 44 as an heretical approach to the truth they will understand their predicament.

I suggest that the answer to the question "why was the reaction not different, to many of the issues raised in the church?" may be found in the fact that for many decisions no tangible and concrete evidence was visible. However, with the issue of women in office we now have such evidence. It must now be indelibly clear that we are not dealing with a detail but an approach to what we conceive truth to be and where it is found — in the conservative's Scripture or the liberal's broadened word of God, enunciated in Report 44. I can think of no like case presenting itself unless it be the day an announced homosexual enters the pulpit.

Conservatives must understand that we are not dealing with anything essentially new; only the form in which it is presented is new. In Calvin's day holders of the liberal view were known as libertines; they were free thinkers in doctrine and became free livers. Calvin dealt with the liberal view quite differently than conservatives of this day do. Unless we bring back such words as antithesis and heresy, we will continue to make excuses or justifications for accepting or tolerating this view. These excuses fall into four categories: (1) we may not forsake the Lord's cause; (2) our local situation is different; (3) we have an orthodox minister; and (4) we pay no attention.

Luther and the Fence-Sitters

The most dangerous group is the fence-sitters, people who have neither convictions or opinions, who are more dangerous than the Boers or Verheys. Luther, shortly before his death, castigated George Major for his studied silence about everything controversial. He said:

It is by your silence and cloaking of false doctrine, plus making it to appear to be acceptable or at least tolerable, or a matter of indifference, that you cast suspicion upon yourself. If you believe as you declare you do in my presence, then so speak also in the church, in public lectures, in sermons and in private conversation. And strengthen your brethren and lead the erring back to the right path. That is what true and honest Christian love demands, rather than that such poor souls should be left floundering in their error, not to speak of falsely influencing others. To contradict the spirits, otherwise your confession is a sham pure and simple, and worth nothing. Whoever regards his doctrine, faith and confession as true, right and certain, can not remain in the same stall with such as teach or adhere to false doctrine, nor can he keep on giving friendly words to Satan and his minions. A teacher who remains silent when errors are taught and nevertheless pretends to be a true teacher is worse than an open fanatic and by his hypocrisy does greater damage than a heretic. Nor can he be trusted. He is a wolf and a fox, a

hireling and a servant of his belly, and ready to despise and sacrifice doctrine, word, faith, church and schools. And he is either a secret bedfellow of the enemies, or a sceptic or a weather vane waiting to see whether Christ or Satan will prove victorious. Or he has no convictions of his own whatever and is not worthy to be called a pupil, let alone a teacher, nor does he want to offer anybody or say a word in favor of Christ or hurt the devil or the world.

Surely, this is the major cause of the church's predicament. We have a host of preachers who have, year after year, preached merely from the label of the jar and never looked into the jar. With controversy raging for at least two decades, these either could not or dared not utter a word and treated all issues as if they did not exist. Is it not true, "A teacher who remains silent when errors are taught and nevertheless pretends to be a true teacher is worse than an open fanatic and by his hypocrisy does greater damage than a heretic? Nor can he be trusted."

Behind these leaders stand a host of likeminded parishioners. The peace they imagine they maintain is that of the graveyard. In so far as these people would be known as conservatives we can assert that they are the liberals of tomorrow. This comes to pass when one sees the distinction between conservative and liberal as a declining scale and not as an antithesis.

For years we have accommodated the liberal. When in 1957 Dr. Daane announced, "The winds of change are blowing. The old guard has either died off or gone into retirement," he astutely marked that as the beginning of this day when conservatives are in the minority, tolerated and relegated to a position of observing the liberal with benign concern.

Rue the day we have imagined lethargy allowed us to accept the predicament as if there were no cost. Surely, the disfavor of Christ is evident in this disunity, and we rob our children of the one thing they need to face the future. I am reminded of Solzhenitsyn's characterization of Russia's young people; "they do not see that it effects them, just as long as they themselves are at liberty with their tape recorders and their disheveled girl friends." A torpid conservatism is useless; to say it even more strongly, detrimental in the battle for the historic faith which incessantly confronts us.

Personally, viewing the ecclesiastical scene, I see nothing short of the encroaching persecution which will awaken and bring recommitment to beleaguered conservatives. However, should it please the Spirit of God to revive us in the midst of our years, four things will become evident: (1) First, a real sense of sin, not seen today; (2) a sense of standing in God's presence. We are playing with the hosts of evil and doing it before God; (3) a burning desire for real Reformed preaching; and (4) the reevaluation of our life style. One gets the impression that we would rather see God go than our material things.

May it please God to send His Spirit to bring such a revival. ●

OUR DOCTRINE OF CHRIST

OUR UNIQUE MEDIATOR

I

Jerome M. Julien

Through the centuries Christians using the words of the Apostles' Creed have confessed their faith "in Jesus Christ, His only begotten Son, our Lord". While the term "only-begotten" is very familiar and definitely Scriptural (John 1:14, 18, 3:16, 18; I John 4:9), it is often misunderstood. Usually, we think that the word means simply that Jesus is the only Son that God has, since, if we were using this rather dated word about someone, that is how we would use it. But if we carefully study the word *monogenēs* (which is translated "only-begotten") we find that it comes from words which mean "one of a kind". In other words, this term "only-begotten" says that Christ is unique.

Now, this uniqueness is seen in many ways, but at the heart of it all is the fact that He is both God and man.

To be sure, not all who claim to be religious believe that Jesus Christ is both God and man. There have always been people who believe that Jesus was a mere man. He was merely a great prophet or teacher. Early in the history of the Church the Ebionites believed this. Today, this belief is known as liberalism.

Another heresy was that of Docetism. This taught that Christ had only a divine nature. He only appeared to be human. Thus, He only appeared to be born and to die.

Then, there were the Arians. They believed that Christ was not God, but only the highest of created beings. Today, in that tradition the Jehovah's Witnesses teach that He is only "a god", not God. While He was on earth He was "a perfect human nature". In answer to Arianism the Athanasian Creed was written. It declares that Christ is "God of God, Light of Light, Very God of Very God, being of one substance with the Father".

What does the Bible say about our unique Mediator? Scripture teaches three things:

1. Our Mediator is truly God.
2. Our Mediator is truly man.
3. Our Mediator is God and man in one person.

I. Our Mediator is truly God.

By revelation God has made this very clear. At one point Jesus says, "I and the Father are one" (John 10:30). The Jews understood Him and therefore believed that He blasphemed. Theirs was no reaction of faith!

That Jesus is God is seen in that *Divine names* are given to Him. One very important and strong proof of this is I John 5:20. Here we read of Jesus Christ: "This is the true God, and eternal life." The importance of this text is that in the Greek Christ is called "the true God". Jehovah's Witnesses will say that Jesus is god, that is, "a god", but they refuse to say that He is "the God". I John 5:20 proves their teaching to be in error. Other passages which show Christ as God include Romans 9:5; John 20:28, 1:1; Jeremiah 23:6 and Isaiah 9:6.

Besides the Divine names, *Divine attributes* are ascribed to Christ. He was considered omniscient by Peter (John 21:17). He is spoken of as eternal (Micah 5:2). He is everlasting (Revelation 1:8).

Divine works are also said to be His. He is creator (John 1:14; Colossians 1:16, 17). He is the God of Providence (Hebrews 1:3). He forgives (Luke 5:20-24). He gives Life (John 5:21).

More, *Divine honors* are given Him. He is worshipped in Scripture (Acts 7:59; John 20:28). He is believed on for Life (John 3:36).

Quite in keeping with all of this is the fact that He is called the Son of God. There are times when Jesus' words imply this idea (John 10:15, 30, 14:20, etc.), and there are times when He comes very close to saying it (eg., Matthew 11:27). Nevertheless, Jesus never calls Himself the Son of God. It remains for others to use this title of Him. When the disciples saw Him coming to them on the storm troubled waters they said, "Of a truth thou art the Son of God" (Matthew 14:33). In response to Jesus' question, "But who say ye that I am?" Peter calls Him "the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:16). When Gabriel announced to Mary the great event of the incarnation he called Jesus the Son of God (Luke 1:35). The Holy Spirit directed the writers of the epistles to use the title, also (Romans 1:3, 4, 8:3; Galatians 4:4; Hebrews 1:1, 2).

What, exactly, does this title mean? It means that the Mediator is the eternal and absolute Son of God, one in essence, or being, with the Father. It means that Christ, the Son of God, is the Second Person of the Trinity.

Why must He be God? The *Heidelberg Catechism* summarizes the faith of the Church by saying (q. 17) "That by the power of His Godhead He might bear in His human nature the burden of God's wrath; and that He might obtain for us, and restore to us, righteousness and life". Only One who has the power to overcome death and hell can be a redeemer. Man is powerless over these. Only Divine power can withstand God's wrath. Jesus *must* be God.

Unless one believes that Jesus *is* God he cannot be a Christian (I John 4:3). Therefore, any group which has a different doctrine, no matter how *slightly* different, IS NOT CHRISTIAN. Theirs is unbelief!

II. Our Mediator is truly man.

While it is absolutely essential that Jesus be truly God (or we have no salvation) it is equally necessary that He be truly man. Further, He must be righteous, or sinless man. The *Heidelberg Catechism* (q.

16) teaches us to confess this by stating that the Mediator must be true and righteous man "Because the justice of God requires that the same human nature which has sinned should make satisfaction for sin, and because one who himself is a sinner cannot satisfy for others."

For two reasons Jesus must be man, and righteous man at that. First, the payment for sin must be made by man for it is man who has sinned. He alone can suffer in body and soul. The Old Testament offerings did not pay for the sins of God's people. They couldn't (Hebrews 10:4). They spoke vividly of a blood that would be shed — the blood of Jesus Christ. At the same time that shedding of animals' blood brought a ceremonial cleansing. How much greater in effect is Christ's blood (Hebrews 9:13, 14)! As man, our Savior knew the depths into which we had plunged and thus could act as our merciful High Priest before God (Hebrews 2:17, 18).

He had to stand in relationship to the Law in our place. Only as man could our Mediator do this. He had to answer God's demands with an uncompromised and perfect "yes". To put it another way, He had to fulfill all righteousness for us.

For this reason, it is always emphasized that Christ is, in the second place, truly righteous man. He knew no sin. Only a sinless man can stand before God and have communion with Him, as Isaiah testified (Isaiah 6:5). Jesus had to be sinless in order to fulfill His work as our Substitute (I Peter 3:18). Besides, only a sinless man, one who has never committed any sin can suffer punishment for someone else's sin. Because of the completeness of God's wrath on sin a sinner would spend eternity bearing God's wrath, and eternity never ends. Jesus was without sin (II Corinthians 5:21) and therefore could take on Himself our sins and at the same time be

utterly obedient to the Father so that He would pay for all the sins of His people. To do this He had to be man.

But how do we know that Jesus is man? Some, in centuries past, have denied this. Today, perhaps the emphasis is too heavily on Jesus as man. Nevertheless, Scripture speaks clearly of Christ's humanity in many different ways. We are told that Jesus came in the flesh, i.e., the human nature (John 1:14; I Timothy 3:16; I John 4:2). Furthermore, we know how this happened: Jesus came through the instrument of a woman (Luke 1, 2; Galatians 4:4). Studying the Gospels we realize that though others were astounded by what He did, they always saw Him as a man. Having a body as do all men, He ate, drank, slept and grew (Luke 2:52). He had human wants and experienced suffering, too (Hebrews 2:10, 18, 5:8). He had the feelings of the human nature: He groaned in spirit, was troubled and He wept (John 11:33, 35).

In addition to this, He called Himself the Son of Man. Though this title is first found in the Old Testament (Psalm 8:4; Daniel 7:13), it was used by Jesus as a self-designation more than forty times. By using it, Jesus focuses on the depth of His humiliation, but also the honor and glory which will be His in the everlasting Messianic kingdom.

Only as He is God *and* man can He deliver us from the bondage and death of sin. What a marvellously unique Savior God saw fit to give His Church. Is it any wonder that believers have testified:

Beautiful Savior!
King of creation!
Son of God and Son of Man!
Truly I'd love Thee,
Truly I'd serve Thee,
Light of my soul, my joy, my crown. ●

LORD, GIVE US GOOD PREACHERS!

G. LIEVAART

"Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us." 2 Cor. 5:20(a)

Not Just Talking, But Preaching!

Those who attend church services nowadays often experience very strange things, not only with respect to the organization of the service liturgical-

**This appeared in Dutch in WAARHEID EN EENHEID (Truth and Unity), a Dutch publication, Jan. 26, 1979. Preaching today, in our opinion, is not only under attack by many who would replace it with other things, but is also misused by many who pretend to be ministers of the Word of God. The author writes from his vantage-point as a member of the Gereformeerde Kerken in The Netherlands. The translation is by Rev. John H. Piersma of Sioux Center, Iowa.*

ly but also the manner with which some believe that they may preach. Let's reflect upon these things.

If things are well with us, then we go to church Sundays to learn God's Word (L.D. 38, Catechism) as it is proclaimed by one of God's servants. Because they are commissioned to "preach the Word" (2 Tim. 4:2; 2 Cor. 4:5). This means that the minister does not come in his own name, but with a special mandate from God to speak HIS WORD in His name: a word which exposes, comforts, warns and encourages. He who stands in the pulpit is according to 2 Cor. 5:20 the *ambassador of Christ*, the one in and through whom God actually speaks to His congregation. In the Sunday worship services nothing less than the "bread of life" is served, that spiritual nourishment which we need in order to live as HIS PEOPLE during the week ahead. And that Word of God — nothing else, nothing less — we desperately need in order to live. It is our pilgrim's provision on life's journey to heaven.

That means that the congregation must really see and respect the minister as the servant of the Lord. Similarly, the preacher must not bring whatever he chooses or pleases, but only that which *the Lord* as

His Sender wants to say to His congregation. And that happens in the official church worship service, called by the elders, for there is the local gathering of God's people.

That implies that the preacher is fully *aware* of the holiness and the earnestness of his service to Christ, that things do not turn about him but that he must point away from self to his Lord! The SENDER of this servant — He is central. For that reason a friendly little talk before the service, a kind of "pastoral greeting" in the sense of "how nice to see you" is dangerous because it arouses the feeling that we are engaged in "a cozy mutual meeting" rather than to exercise real worship activity in God's very presence.

If the preacher is aware of Him in whose Name he speaks this will affect not only the *content* but also the *style* of his preaching. That means: he must speak in a proper manner with no "play to the balcony" or use of that language which is vulgar or offensively common. When one hears some preachers in the pulpit these days one is struck that what they say is *mere talk* rather than *preaching* (the exposition and application of God's Word).

Often the sermon today is short, sometimes very short. It seems as if sermons must always be shortened and easier to follow — and with such a meager diet the church member and the church people are sent off to work for a whole week. Some church members can't suppress the question, "Why did that minister have to study theology?" What he is doing isn't really preaching anyway, but simply a miniature address or a collection of stories with a few pious remarks thrown in. This fills the time, but what in the last analysis is its real content?

Do church people still know what a sermon ought to be? He who consistently uses a very thin diet spiritually will soon find himself undernourished and without knowledge. Note, on the spiritual level, when it concerns food for the soul, it is also true that "poor sermons and lean preaching" bring dire consequences.

I know, you can get so used to it so that after a while you don't see it any more and become insensitive. Quickly one then reacts to such preaching by saying that it is still "pretty good". This goes on until one somehow gets to hear a good, substantial — to put it bluntly: old-fashioned Christo-centric — sermon. For some this arouses regret because so much has been missed! At least if it is still spiritually well with a person. We say this because it can also arouse the opposite reaction: the "good sermon" is then offensive because people no longer know and/or care to know what preaching really is and what it ought to be. Some then dare to defend the other so-called "sermons": "I don't think its so bad," and, "After all we live in a different time".

All of us concerned churchgoers have in recent times experienced enough of that. No wonder that some make long trips or attend church in other denominations in order to find a good sermon. It is a matter of deepest seriousness that such effort

seems necessary. Often stones are served up for bread, and with that the people of the church must make do for the coming week. Would the deepest cause here be the ever more infectious "horizontalistic spirit of the age?" Sometimes in their discouragement people ask, "Is it for that preacher still a matter of *calling* instead of 'just a job' in which his heart is little interested?" Does he only see the people and not the Lord of the congregation, for whom he must talk long enough to fill the (short) time of the service, or is he so actually and deeply convinced of his "holy calling" that you can sense out of his very *words* and from the very *manner* of speaking that he knows what he is doing? After all, it is an enormous privilege to be allowed to speak *in the Name of God to His people* as a *prophet* in His service. And is it not a speaking which as a holy obligation requires that one speaks nothing else than the Word of the Lord God?

Audience Participation!

It is therefore good at this point to say once again that if the preaching does not demonstrate such character church people ought to get *into action*, demanding of the consistory that this be given to the congregation!

After all, we do not attend church to listen to all kinds of stories or opinions from the pulpit, or to be kept pleasantly occupied for an hour (or less) by the preacher.

We are there to hear the Word of God proclaimed, to meet God thereby in order to dwell there in communion with Him and with each other. And, above all, to experience the ministry of reconciliation: Be ye reconciled to God through Jesus Christ as the Word of life. That after all is the heart and the richness of Scriptural preaching, the dispensing of the manifold grace of God. By that the people of the church are built up and sinners by sheer grace through faith in Jesus Christ are actually *reconciled with God*.

That sometimes on the pulpit, from which the Truth of God ought be brought (that is the real feast, namely, that God will yet speak to us of "grace and peace" for Christ's sake), this very Truth is doubted or denied by them is still worse! There we find one of the deepest causes for the current ecclesiastical decline. Bad sermons which fall short of God's Word and its real interpretation have a direct and evil result on the church's condition.

Sometimes one asks, "why do they no more see or notice this or that instance of apostasy, or such spiritual reversal?" Would it be due to the fact that we can also be rendered unfruitful or even dead by such preaching? Eyes can be closed and ears can be shut, so that people no longer see and now shrug their shoulders when someone else protests against pulpit abuse. Sometimes it seems that some believe that they may tolerate just anything. The church people who do not protest against such things will get preachers who dare to go on and on in the wrong course. Why do church people simply keep still?

It must be said loudly: Get into action! Don't just let it go past you. Ask for that to which you for God's sake are entitled and which you for your very life's welfare are in need, that you may be fed unto everlasting life.

Life during the week — wherein we *as believers* must become noticeable — has everything to do with that proclamation of the Word. And for that reason we may not be satisfied with the sincerest but mere dissatisfaction, the kind which sighs, saying "Really it ought to be different," or, "The preaching today was again very poor, very thin fare. It's too bad! No, something ought to be done about it." You have to work as much as you can in order that the desperately needed reformation in these things may come. Cease not to talk about these things *and* work at it! Above all, *pray unceasingly for the restoration of the needed preaching!*

And may God give our preachers the courage to bring God's Word unabridged, uncurtailed. Not adapted to what people think they want to hear, but to what God wills that the people shall hear. And must hear!

Such a preachment will naturally be in good pulpit style and pulpit language, a style not geared to human effect, not characterized by the desire to imitate unduly commonplace language, not adapted to the one whom one is addressing but to the God in whose Name one is speaking. It is simply impossible and improper to use just any word or, for example, to speak in an obviously intentionally popular way in order to gain a hearing and to create an effect. He who stands in the holy service of the Lord as His preacher must also use the vocabulary which benefits this service. The preacher must speak as one who is completely impressed with the holy earnestness of his commission to speak only in the Name of the Lord.

AN ALARMING TREND II

Henry Baker

In 1952 I attended the Synod of the Gereformeerde Kerken in the Netherlands as a delegate of our Church. My wife and I intended to worship in one of the churches nearest the place where we stayed. We located it on Saturday evening and made acquaintance with the custodian. While we were chatting with him his daughter and her husband

This is a second article by Rev. Henry Baker, retired minister of the CRC in Grand Rapids.

twenty-two / june, 1979

Give us the clear and true Word of the Lord!

This must be done in conformity to the mandate of the Lord.

Church people must not be kept occupied by the typical efforts of some kind of conference leader, to use that analogy, but by the pure preaching of the Word by God's ambassadors. That Word must not be subjected to our efforts to make it 'attractive' for men — it is too holy and too high for that — but preached as the divine command to believe, to be converted, and thereby accepted. Once again: the Word of God must not be made acceptable and attractive by virtue of all kinds of daring expressions or down-to-earth language characteristic of the world and designed purely to create effect, even if it does make people in church laugh, but God's people must be fed and maintained by the true and clear Word of God. That other banal speech presents the Gospel precisely as unworthy of anyone's trust.

Not what the preacher as such has to say, nor how cute, nice and unique his manner of speech, matters but what the Lord has to say — that is what preaching is all about!

Pray, therefore, for faithful and beautiful preachers. Pray: Lord, give wherever necessary, even on the pulpit, conversion, courage and boldness! Give us preachers so deeply stirred by your Word and impressed with the truthfulness, trustworthiness and authority of it, that they can do and desire nothing else but to bring that Word alone in all its glory and holiness, power, authority and majesty.

This means no human word or a gospel according to man's desires or interest. We want exclusively the full and satisfying Word of God, that bread of life, Jesus Christ, who said in John 6:35, "I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." ●

passed by and said that they were on their way to a dance hall. Apparently this met with his approval for he wished them an enjoyable evening.

We hardly surmised that something similar would happen here among us in 1980. If the Board of Trustees of Calvin College and Seminary has its way, it will. The board desires that secular dancing be introduced at Calvin. A committee has been appointed to study the question whether that should be done.

THE OCCASION. The occasion for Synod's action in 1966 in reversing the stand of the Church on the movie matter was an overture from a Classis, which asserted that 70% of its young people were attending movies. The occasion for the Board of Trustees' proposal that the secular dance be introduced at Calvin is that students are already dancing in the halls of the dormitories. Some, perhaps many, love

dancing and have made it a part of their life-style. The board, of which the larger number are ministers, proposes that the Church make that which, till now, was against the rules, legitimate. The board contends that the dance must "be brought under the control of the redeeming power of our Lord." That, it claims, is our cultural mandate. Which, of course, means that till now our Church and its members have neglected their sacred duty and not really understood what their cultural mandate was.

WHAT IS THE SITUATION? The Christian Reformed Church does not condone secular dancing. For 125 years it has held that the dance is a worldly entertainment.

Dr. Abraham Kuyper, the staunch advocate of the antithesis, of whom we are proud to be followers, until his death denounced secular dancing as a sinful entertainment. "De Heraut," a popular religious periodical of which he was the founder and editor, maintained until its demise that secular dancing should be condemned.

It is no secret that elders and deacons and their wives have adopted social dancing as a part of their life-style. Notwithstanding the fact that Christians, according to God's Word, have their citizenship in heaven" (Philippians 3:20), and their names "written in the Book of life" (Philippians 4:3) they indulge in promiscuous dancing in public dance halls. They patronize a business that has been and is a threat to the purity of the Church.

Calvin College and Seminary students are dancing in the dormitories and in public dance halls. On a main highway leading into Grand Rapids a "Calvin Dance" is being advertised. An increasing number of members in good and regular standing dance.

How a promiscuous dance can be "brought under the control of the power of our Lord" is a mystery to me. I have never heard of anyone doing it. Maybe the board means that each individual must put his personal dance under that control. Does that hold for his or her partner also?

According to the findings of the board with respect to the introduction of the social dance at Calvin 8 of 9 Classes, 135 of 159 churches, 4 of 5 organizations, and 93 of 95 individuals that responded to a poll, were opposed to it. In spite of the fact that a large majority is opposed, the board said it was ready to implement its own decision in favor of dancing.

The student body of Calvin College and Seminary is cosmopolitan. It consists of Jew and Gentiles, believers and unbelievers, members of the red, yellow, black, and white races. We may not be racially prejudiced and must respect the rights of minorities. Neither should we forget what God says, "Do not be mismatched with unbelievers. For what partnership have righteousness and iniquity? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? What accord has Christ with Belial? Or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? (2 Corinthians

6:14,15). Call that discrimination. And that it is, but it is well-pleasing to our Lord.

What will happen? When action is taken on the proposal of the board it will be a decision of the Christian Reformed Church, for our College and Seminary are not controlled by society, but by the denomination. In other words, action favorable to the board's desire will be an approval of secular dancing for our people in Grand Rapids, but also for our people in every village and city. Dance studios will, at least temporarily, do a booming business and a Saturday Night's Fever will not be a rare thing for the dancers.

Local churches, if they don't want their members to go to sweaty dance halls that reek of a mixture of every brand of whisky on the market, will have to provide a place, even as Calvin will be doing. They will also have to engage someone to temper jazz and rock and roll music as Calvin intends to do.

I regret that Synod charged the appointed committee to give guide-lines. That seems to imply that Synod believes pro-promiscuous dancing will be approved in 1980. That part of Synod's decision is presumptuous and wholly unwarranted. If Synod approves secular dancing, no board or College is going to restrict the sexual drive. No guidelines or ordinances are going to restrain people from frequenting taverns, dance halls, casinos, and cabarets.

As an aftermath of World War II, the Korean War, and a senseless Vietnam War we are living in a society that has little respect for authority, is committed to permissiveness, to a more liberal way of living, and to the free use of alcoholic beverages and drugs. The affluence of today, instead of producing a life of gratitude and dedication to God, is drawing professing Christians away from Him. Lack of spirituality plagues our Church. A clarion call by our Church for a closer walk with God and to bring our lives completely under the lordship of our Savior, is urgent.

In an era when amorality, immorality, secularism, sensuality and humanism are rampant and we all have become more liberal in our personal behavior and manner of living (there is no sense in trying to deny it) we are petitioned to lower the bar still more and approve a morally questionable entertainment — the secular dance.

AN OPINION. Mention is made by the board of the decisions of 1966 and 1971. The advisory committee of the 1978 Synod has justly said, "It is impossible to determine precisely what the Synod of 1971 intended by its decision relative to the dance" and "There are inherent difficulties involved in applying the Film Arts' decisions of 1966 to the dance."

It is clear from the Acts of 1978 that the appointed committee is not charged to deal directly with the board's problem. It will "study the matter of the dance in the light of the Scriptures."

In view of the fact that secular dancing is, to say the least, a morally questionable entertainment, in my opinion, our Church cannot and may not approve of its members indulging therein.



JONATHAN EDWARDS: THEOLOGIAN OF THE HEART, by Harold P. Simonson. William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company. 174 pages. \$6.50. Reviewed by Rev. Charles Greenfield, Emeritus, Kalamazoo, Michigan.

There are some emphases, rather contradictory, that apparently have always been a concern of the Church. John W. Montgomery in *Christianity Today*, once analyzed "Washington Christianity" as "superficial, non-doctrinal, and experientialistic."

In this book Harold P. Simonson, professor of English at the University of Washington, Seattle, presents Jonathan Edwards as working pretty much within this tension. He sees Edwards as basically a theologian of the heart, and not as many scholars see him, one whose theology is essentially influenced by John Locke, and as one who although seemingly demanding rather rigid logic, presenting the Deity as an angry God before Whom sinner had better tremble, really reflecting the genius of Calvinism with the emphasis of the surrendered heart to God.

Whether Simonson has accurately reflected Edwards' life (conversion experiences and spiritual development), his works, and thought patterns, I am not enough of a student of Edwards to be able to discern. It appears from the documentations that he has done his homework well. It is not always easy to know where we are given the thought of Edwards or the conviction of the author himself. Likely both.

Completing his life during the half century prior to the birth of our nation, Ed-

wards left his influence on much of the Christian thinking of the new nation. Edwards was a key figure in the Great Awakening of 1734-35, but also one of the most perceptive critics of the movement. While he strongly disassociated himself with the excesses and deceptiveness of experiences of the Awakening even calling some of the excesses "evangelistic hypocrisy," he vigorously assailed many critics for their lukewarmness, claiming that there should be visible responses to the gospel.

Simonson has given us an excellent source book for a better understanding of Edwards' place in the Awakening, his influence on American Calvinism, his losing battle with New England liberalism, his concern about the problem of the use of language as a vehicle of grace, his grasp of the "grand illusion" of natural man (his ontological independence), and his earnest anguish about influencing the souls and lives of his countrymen, challenging their smugness in the face of a righteous God.

THE GLORY WOODS, by Virginia Greer; published by Christian Herald House, 40 Overlook Drive, Chappaqua, New York 10514. Publication date: April 30, 1976, hardbound, \$5.95. Reviewed by Dena Korfker.

"The Glory Woods" is sub-titled "A Hymn of Healing." It could also be called "A Hymn of Discovery." For Mrs. Greer discovered many things in her "Glory Woods."

Mrs. Greer spent most of her married life in the city, in Mobile, Alabama. She raised her family there and was very active in her church (Baptist). She was also a career-woman. She was a writer and a journalist. Her first book, *Give Them Their Dignity* dealt with teaching teens in church school. Five years of reporting as an editor for the *Mobile Press Register* won her three major awards, and her articles appeared in over thirty newspapers and magazines.

Coming to live in the deep woods of Alabama, twelve miles from the city, was indeed a discovery for Mrs. Greer. Her husband had always been an outdoor man, and with him as teacher, she is soon overwhelmed by the discovery of how God reveals Himself in His creation. She rejoices in all the small forest creatures who come to visit her, she finds herself making friends with and talking to them.

Suddenly her wonderful, new life is shattered by the appearance of cancer with its surgery and all its aftermath, and the possibility of death. In all the glory of her autumn woods she learns to face her problems, and she discovers the great joy of God's bountiful grace in His superb handiwork and in the Christian love of family and friends. She considered God's greatest miracle to be the fact of her complete acceptance of His way in her life.

Read it. You will enjoy it and be inspired.

YOU'VE GOT CHARISMA!, by Lloyd John Ogilvie. Published by Abingdon Press, Nashville, Tenn. 1975. 175 pages. Price, \$6.95. Reviewed by Rev. Henry Petersen.

This book of eleven sermons by the pastor of Hollywood Presbyterian Church is presented to give the biblical meaning of charisma and to share the "conviction that charisma is available to all of us" (p. 9).

The author has a dynamic style that holds the reader's interest. We can imagine that his congregation listened with rapt attention to these messages. He no doubt stimulated many of his people to stir up the gifts of the Spirit they have.

Charisma is defined as "grace-gifted." "A charismatic person recognizes that all of life is a gift lent to be spent for Christ" (p. 18). Charisma begins in the heart, presumably in the heart regenerated by the Holy Spirit. It must be used to develop the Christian life; indeed, it is the Christian life in action.

Rev. Ogilvie has some good things to tell us about prayer, hope, and spiritual power. He uses many illustrations, several from his own life's experiences. His greatest chapter, in our opinion, is the one on the power of the resurrection, likely an Easter sermon. His chapter on the Holy Spirit and his power in us is for the most part Scripturally sound. He does believe that some Christians today have the gift of healing and of speaking in tongues (including himself) but he does not over-emphasize these gifts of the Spirit.

These sermons are topical, not strictly exegetical. The choice of Scripture for each one, however, is apt and in most cases more than just illustrative.

You will not agree with every statement of the author, but you will profit from reading this book.