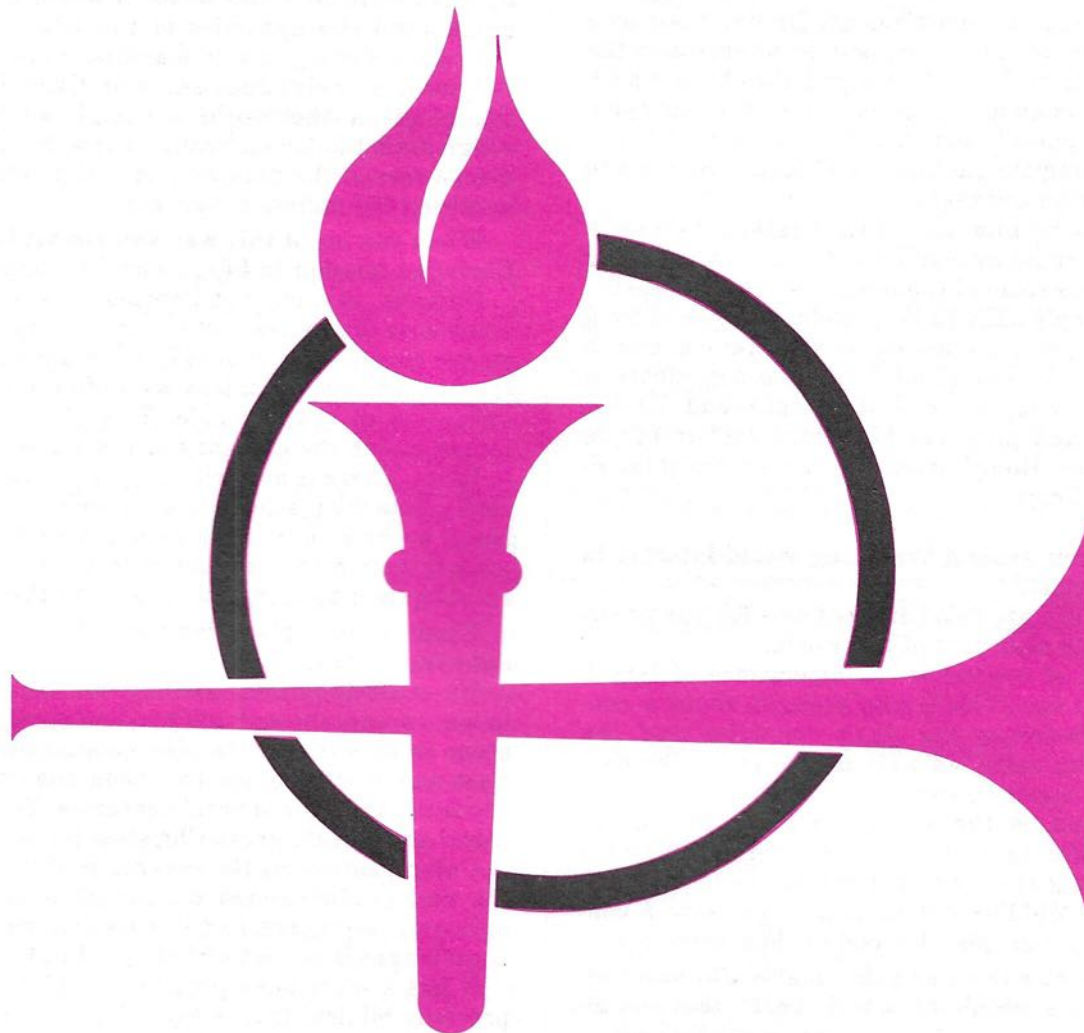


# THE OUTLOOK

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DEVOTED TO THE EXPOSITION AND DEFENSE OF THE REFORMED FAITH

JULY 1979



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**THE MUSLIM WORLD  
REFORMED OR PRESBYTERIAN  
PICTURES OF CHRIST**

## Interview with Bassam Madany

### “What do you say to 120 million Muslims?”

Many American Christians are finding their own knowledge of Islam inadequate to understand the developments in Iran, Africa and the Arab world. Missions to Islamic countries report a fresh openness to the gospel, and last October saw 150 missionary strategists gathered in Colorado Springs to analyze Muslim evangelization.

The following interview with Bassam Madany, a Syrian-born radio evangelist with the “Back to God Hour,” probes some of the unique aspects of Muslim work. Madany’s daily radio broadcast is heard from Morocco to Iraq, attracting 1400 letters a month from this Islamic heartland. Madany is a graduate of Reformed Presbyterian (Pittsburgh) and Calvin Seminaries and prepares his broadcasts from the “Back to God Hour” studios in Palos Heights, Illinois, near Chicago.

#### **How do you explain the rising world interest in the Middle East?**

I think there are two basic reasons for our preoccupation with that part of the world.

The first, of course, is the emergence of Israel, thirty years ago. This event brought about a confrontation between the Arab countries and the young Jewish state, as well as the active involvement of the super-powers.

The second, is the sudden richness of the oil-producing Middle Eastern countries. It has become inevitable that the West be more involved in the affairs of the Middle East in order to ensure a continuous supply of this lifeblood of their economy.

#### **Is there such a thing as a thoroughly Christian approach to the problems which beset the Middle East?**

I believe there is. I am aware that a great number of evangelical Christians are committed to a specific doctrine of the “last things” which influences their attitude to the state of Israel. I do not want to enter into the details of that subject but I do want to emphasize that all Christians in the Western world *must* speak out for a just and peaceful settlement of the Arab-Israeli problem.

*Rev. Bassam Madany of South Holland, Illinois, is the Christian Reformed minister in charge of the Arabic broadcast of the Back-to-God Hour. This article is reprinted by permission from the March, 1979 issue of Eternity, 1716 Spruce St., Philadelphia, PA 19103.*

It is unfortunate that this whole matter has been consistently approached from a purely nationalistic point of view; as if there were no specific religious factors in the conflict. Christians simply must not accept the secular world’s explanation of the root causes. At the bottom of this ongoing confrontation is a religious factor which we Christians should be the first to understand; that is, if we look at it from a biblical point of view.

#### **Are you implying that there is a faith dimension here?**

Exactly. At the bottom of the Arab-Israeli problem lies the inability of the Arab nations to accept the reemergence of a state which claims allegiance to a faith which has long been supplanted by Islam. I believe the western world has failed to understand the dynamics of the Islamic assertion that God, having given mankind two “heavenly” religions, namely Judaism and Christianity, has finally given the world a completed “heavenly” religion, that is Islam. Probably few Westerners are even aware of the basic beliefs of this religion which numbers 600 million adherents.

#### **When you put it this way you almost imply that a Christian mission to Islam would be impossible.**

Difficult, yes; but not impossible. I would like to emphasize that we cannot maintain a truly Christian stance vis-a-vis the Middle East, or any other part of the Muslim world, unless we define our Christian obligation to these people. This obligation can be placed under the category of the Christian mission to Islam. There is no such thing as a purely abstract, coldly detached, scholarly approach to our subject: Not if we believe that the gospel is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes. We have an obligation to bring this gospel to these people.

#### **What is the explanation for so little having been done in the past?**

We must take into account the facts of history. Islam spread throughout predominantly Christian areas in its early years. The peoples of the Middle East and North Africa had been converted to the Christian faith for several centuries. They gave the world some of its great Christian leaders.

Unfortunately, by the seventh century, which was the time of Mohammed and the phenomenal spread of Islam, the church had lost its evangelical fervor. It no longer lived out of the Word of God.

It has always been puzzling to me how so many precious biblical truths could have been forgotten. However, one could hardly expect the church which had lost the evangel to evangelize its conquerors! And they were conquerors who came with a super-confidence because they believed that their religion was the fulfillment of all the previously revealed religions.

#### **Since there seems to be an unprecedented interest in Islam among evangelicals, can we expect a breakthrough in the near future?**

First of all, I am thoroughly convinced that God has a plan for both the Muslims and the Jews, and I have no doubt whatsoever that when the end comes there will be multitudes of saved people coming from both these groups. The question which faces us

now is how we can bring about the evangelization and re-establishment of a church in an area which has been so fruitless for 1300 years. And our answer must reside in the patient, loving and relevant presentation of the entire scriptural revelation to the Muslims and Jews of today.

My twenty years of experience in radio missions among the Arabic-speaking Muslims of the world has given me a special inside view of this new era of missions. It has convinced me beyond a doubt that there is a general curiosity, even a thirst, among the Muslims for the facts contained in Holy Scripture. They are eager to know more about the Old Testament prophets. They are fascinated by the life of the Messiah. Not enough information has been available to them in their holy book concerning all the messengers who brought God's Word to the world prior to the seventh century. There is a new openness to hear the contents of the Scripture.

No one should conclude, however, that the age-long barriers have suddenly crumbled or disappeared. They haven't. It is just that there are opportunities today which have never been present before.

**You must have developed a specific approach to the Muslim. Could you give us some idea of how you go about presenting the gospel to them?**

Gladly. Since Islam, to a great extent, arose because of the failure of the early church to evangelize the Arabs, I consider it of utmost importance to share the Scriptures with the Arabs of today. Radio gives the church the ideal means to do this. In a daily ministry it is possible to be very systematic and to reach the entire Muslim world with the exposition and proclamation of the Word of God.

But I would like to stress at this point that it is very important that our goal remains always before our eyes — namely that we are engaged in a Christian mission to Islam. This new means — namely radio — is important in the sense that it gives us the tool to reach the Muslim; but far more important is the message.

One must be conscious, when opening the Scriptures to the Muslims of today, of the many misconceptions they hold concerning the major doctrines of the Christian faith. For example, in the doctrine of the Word of God, they believe that Moses received the Pentateuch from God; David, the Psalms; and Jesus, the gospel.

They are not aware of the real contents of the Word of God; such as the books of Kings, the prophets, the wisdom literature of the Old Testament or the epistles of the New Testament. Something even more serious in their concept is that they regard the whole Word of God as *purely law*. Even the word "gospel" to them is simply the title of a higher law which was revealed to the Messiah.

One cannot, of course, avoid mentioning the Muslim misunderstanding of the doctrine of the holy trinity, which creates one of the greatest obstacles to their acceptance of the gospel. The impossibility of a trinitarian God is the subject of endless Islamic

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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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sermons; a misunderstanding which has become firmly entrenched over the centuries.

The denial of the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ, as well as of the historicity of the crucifixion, are two other beliefs which contribute to the difficulties one faces, and which prompted the late Samuel Zwemer to describe our work as "the glory of the impossible."

**These would seem to be insurmountable obstacles. How can you open the Scriptures to a Muslim? Aren't they completely immunized against the Christian understanding of revelation and redemption?**

Before answering these questions I would like to emphasize that my strategy, if you call it such, does not lie in the area of polemics about the aforementioned doctrines. I begin with, and continually emphasize the plight of man and the grace of God.

You see, what we often forget is that Islam, like Judaism, denies the necessity of redemption. This denial is based on a thoroughly nonbiblical view of man. In other words, the weakest point in Islam is not merely in the area of theology or Christology, but biblical anthropology. Islam teaches the basic goodness of man and does not recognize an inherited sin from our first parents. And yet, the realities of life within and without the Muslim world, cannot be squared with such an optimistic view of man.

In my evangelistic work via radio and the printed page, I remind Muslims of the realistic biblical doctrine of the fall of man. What makes the Christian message "good news" is that it clearly proclaims God's remedy for the plight of man. I am very thankful for the theological disciplines which shaped my missionary training, but it is absolutely necessary to have a thorough commitment to the full authority and complete reliability of Scripture, in order to lovingly and patiently proclaim the message of historic Christianity.

It is true that everything in the Muslim's historical and cultural background immunizes him against the reception of the Christian gospel. However, we often forget, in our extreme busyness with doing missions that our role in the Christian mission to Islam is purely secondary. The major work of missions among Muslims (or any other people) is the present activity of the Lord Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit. Christian missions to Islam is not psychological warfare. It is the activity of God through his church commissioning evangelists to proclaim the gospel.

In his innermost being the modern Muslim, who is also under the influence of western secularism, experiences the same problems and contradictions within his life as many other non-Christians. This inner lostness or malaise is realistically diagnosed and described when the full Christian message is expounded in his ears in terms understandable to him. This is never to be divorced from the inner working of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of those who belong to Christ, a work which eventually blossoms into the beautiful confession "Jesus is Savior and Lord."

**Can you share with us some particular examples from your work of areas in which you avoid or use**

**certain words to prevent confusion in the Muslim mind?**

I appreciate this question very much since my earlier emphasis on the extremely important role of the Holy Spirit in missions might be misunderstood as an excuse for a rather simplistic approach. I am convinced that our presentation of the Good News must be done in full consciousness of the totality of the Islamic culture and a thorough knowledge of the language of the area to be reached.

To be specific, as I have already noted, Muslims have been taught that Jesus was the recipient of a heavenly book called the *Injeel* (the evangel). When we open the New Testament to the Muslims we must be very careful not to give the impression that we have four different gospels — of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Unfortunately this is the impression given by the vocabulary used in the 1860 translation of the Arabic Bible, commonly used among the Christians of the Middle East. We must emphasize that there is one gospel, the gospel of Jesus Christ; whether it be according to Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Paul or Isaiah!

Once a listener from North Africa wrote to me saying: "When you talk about sins in the *plural* I understand you, but I do not understand you at all when you talk about sin in the *singular*." This was a very good observation. The Islamic heritage only enables Muslims to think of sins as isolated acts of transgression against the law of God. There is no original sin in Islam.

This remark from one of my listeners has helped me to be more interpretive in my handling of the Scriptures. What do we mean by sin in the singular? Most of us would answer that it is our sinful nature, the indwelling sin and our proneness to do that which is against the law of God.

But these are biblical words which are only understood by the initiated within the Christian communities. We must tirelessly put ourselves in the place of the Muslim and patiently interpret the basic biblical concepts in synonymous expressions hoping that one of them would pierce through the veil that surrounds his heart.

Take for example our Savior's name. Jesus the Messiah is one of our most precious names in Scripture. *Al-Masih* (the Messiah) is commonly used by both Muslims and Christians in the Middle East. Unfortunately the name Jesus, or its Arabic equivalent *Yesu'a*, does not ring any bell in the mind of the hearer. Does this mean that we should drop the use of the word Jesus as the name of the Messiah? Not at all. But we must translate that word and make frequent use of its meaning — *the Savior*.

We do have the tradition of such usage in the Bible itself. Do we not hear Matthew saying Immanuel, which being interpreted means "God with us"? Likewise, when our Lord's birth was announced the angel instructed Joseph: "Thou shalt call his name Jesus because he shall save his people from their sins."

**What are your hopes for the future based on your experiences?**

Notwithstanding many factors which make us rather pessimistic about the immediate future of the Middle East I remain hopeful for the future. These are my reasons:

Never before have so many Muslims heard the gospel as today. Multitudes are not only hearing but are in touch with those who are proclaiming it to them over the airwaves and through the printed page.

Another important point is that whereas in the past the Christian mission to Islam occurred within the context of European colonialism and appeared often to Muslims as part of the imperialistic thrust of the Western world, today we have no such burden accompanying our missionary endeavor.

Then there is the new diaspora or dispersion of Christians living and working in the Muslim world and Muslims living and studying in the Western world. This is a new and exciting phenomenon.

Ultimately, my greatest source of hope is God's plan for the children of Abraham, both through Ishmael and through Isaac. We do have a specific teaching in Holy Scripture (Rom. 9-11) concerning the future conversion of the Jews. I also believe there are enough general references to the ultimate triumph of the gospel among all nations with no exceptions (Rev. 7). I have no doubt that many of the saved will have come from the multitudes of the Muslim world.

I would like to say that we Christians must show a great love for the Muslims. The legacy of mistrust and misunderstanding must be replaced by respect and concern for their spiritual welfare. We must make it clear that we are not interested in imposing our culture upon them. This is not our calling. We must faithfully and relevantly share with the Muslims of today, the Good News of Jesus the Messiah.

As for results, we should not hide the fact from ourselves or from them, that only God can change the hearts of people and make them slaves of Jesus the Redeemer.

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## THE UNPARDONABLE SIN (Part 1)

JOHN H. PIERSMA

The Bible says that there is a sin which humans commit which is absolutely and finally unpardonable, unforgivable.

Sensitive Christians cannot help but be frightened by this most horrible revelation. Perhaps many of us know people for whom this fear became one of total despair. How well I remember a dear old saint who, because she had once partaken of Holy Communion under circumstances which she regarded as unworthy, thought that she was irrevocably guilty of this transgression. Her case was obvious. In how many believing hearts does not the fear lurk that

*my* sins might well include one that renders *me* forever ineligible for forgiveness and salvation?

We hope that this study of this difficult aspect of biblical revelation will not only instruct but comfort some anxious heart!

### 1. Does the truth about the unpardonable sin imply that the grace of God is not without limit?

In was in 1938 that a Dutch theologian, A. D. R. Polman, published a book on this subject. It opens with a reference to St. Augustine (354-430 A.D.), which gives some idea as to how long this problem has troubled God's people. Polman wrote,

Augustine has said somewhere that no man can think, speak or write about the doctrine of reprobation truly and helpfully unless he finds a song in his heart to the praise of Him whose eternal election is a much greater mystery. . . . Augustine regarded it as a most wicked arrogance and audacious conceit when some sit in judgment upon the former when they have not experienced the saving glory and wonder of the latter. . . . This holds for our subject (the unpardonable sin) as well. Here, too, every part of our interpretation must be guided and qualified by humble amazement at the unspeakable wonder which is God's gracious forgiveness of our sins.

Polman was right. If we are to speak properly of the unpardonable sin we must first see the amazing wonder which is *forgiveness*. We are best reminded of this by a few randomly chosen citations from Scripture. We begin with Isaiah, who cried

though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. (1:18)

The Spirit inspired Micah to say,

Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth over the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in loving-kindness. He will again have compassion upon us; he will tread our iniquities under foot; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea. (7:18, 19)

One of Paul's grandest doxologies is I Tim. 1:17, "Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen." It is interesting, however, that this loving ascription of praise to God follows upon these words,

I thank him that enabled me, even Jesus Christ our Lord, for that he counted me faithful, appointing me to his service; though I was a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: howbeit I obtained mercy. . . . Faithful is the saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief . . . that in me as chief might Jesus Christ show forth all his longsuffering, for an ensample of them that should thereafter believe on him unto eternal life. (vss. 12, 13, 15, 16)

That is a sample of the way in which the Word speaks about divine forgiveness. If anything is incredible, it is not that there might be a sin unto

death, but that there is a longsuffering of Christ which forgives *me!*

But now let's go back to the question written over this section. Is the grace of God's forgiveness limitless? Is there a God-ordained boundary between that which can be and that which is not forgiven?

The answer is *Yes!*

## 2. Where does the Bible say that such a boundary exists?

There are a number of Bible texts which prominently and incontrovertibly indicate that there is a sin which will not be forgiven. For your convenience we print them here in full.

Our Lord is quoted to say,

Therefore I say unto you, Every sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men; but the blasphemy against the Spirit shall not be forgiven. And whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him; but whosoever shall speak against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, nor in that which is to come. (Matt. 12:31, 32)

Mark reports this,

Verily I say unto you, All their sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and their blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme: but whosoever shall blaspheme against the Holy Spirit hath never forgiveness, *but is guilty of an eternal sin:* because they said, He hath an unclean spirit. (3:28-30, italics inserted)

Luke says,

And every one who shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but unto him that blasphemeth against the Holy Spirit it shall not be forgiven. (12:10)

Surely these passages say very plainly that there is such a thing as an unpardonable sin. It is a sin against the Holy Spirit, more specifically, it is to blaspheme against the Spirit. It is beyond the pale of divine forgiveness.

Other passages are also often considered in this connection. Three of the most familiar are in the Book of Hebrews. They read as follows:

Hebrews 10:26-29: For if we sin wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and a fierceness of fire which shall devour the adversaries. A man that hath set at nought Moses' law dieth without compassion on the word of two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment, think ye, shall he be counted worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?

Hebrews 6:4-6:

For as touching those who were once enlightened and tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and tasted the good Word of God, and the powers of the age to come, and then fell away, it is impossible to renew them

again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.

One final reference: in his first epistle John writes about praying for others. This Christian privilege is very definitely qualified, however, by these words,

If any man see his brother sinning a sin not unto death, he shall ask, and God will give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: not concerning this do I say that he should make request. All unrighteousness is sin: but there is a sin not unto death. (5:15, 16)

## 3. What do such Bible passages mean?

Obviously Matthew 12:31, 32; Mark 3:28, 29 and Luke 12:10 are the primary sources for our interpretation of the unpardonable sin. Especially since there is some difference of opinion as to whether I John 5:16, 17 and the Hebrews passages really refer to the sin against the Holy Spirit. G. C. Berkouwer in his two-volume work entitled *Sin* says, "in John nothing can be found of the *pneumatological* aspect, so definitive in the words of the Gospel writers" (II, p. 111, Dutch ed.). The emphasis in these passages according to such opinions is on the matter of apostasy or falling away from the faith, not on blasphemy of the Spirit.

In our judgment, however, John is definitely referring to the unpardonable sin when he writes that "there is a sin unto death." This is by the nature of the case a sin against the Holy Spirit because it represents a stubborn denial of the truth that Jesus Christ is both God and man in the unity of the divine person, for that message is the testimony of the Spirit through the preaching of the Gospel. K. Schilder was right, we feel, when he wrote

And if later in another Bible passage mention is made of an unpardonable sin it must mean the same outpouring of wickedness which is mentioned by name in Matt. 12. (*Woord en Kerk*, I, p. 222)

Going on, however, to the very important passages quoted above from Matthew, Mark and Luke, we should note first of all that the setting was a fierce conflict between our Lord and the Pharisees. Matthew 12:14 says that things had already reached the stage in which the "Pharisees went out, and took counsel against Him, how they might destroy him." Aware of this, Jesus withdrew from Jerusalem. People found Him, however, "and he healed them all."

Perhaps the wonder which impressed the people most was our Lord's power over the demons, those awful instigators of every kind of opposition to the Savior. Deeply moved, they asked, "Can this be the son of David" (that is, the promised Messiah)? Mark tells us that the tensions aroused by our Lord's mighty works were so great that His own family thought it necessary to save Him from the horrible consequences they envisioned. They thought Him to be a wild-eyed fanatic or even psychotic who needed help, so that "they set out to take charge of him, for people were saying, 'He must be mad!'" (Mark 3:21, Phillips).

Certain experts, scribes and Pharisees, decided that it was time to investigate. So they came out to see Jesus, leaving Jerusalem. They concluded that Jesus, lord of the demons, was Himself demon possessed. He could do what He did because He was in league with Beelzebub, chief of the devils. Note what they alleged: Christ was really a damnable Nazarene. He had sold Himself to Satan and was therefore able to do such great wonders. That was the explanation of His power over the unclean spirits.

It was this incredible blasphemy which moved our Lord to speak the most terrifying words ever heard anywhere! He regarded their sin as blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, because it was by that Spirit's omnipotent and gracious power that He did His mighty and gracious works. To say that He did what He did by a Satanic power was to speak evil of the Spirit. That sin, Christ declared, was *absolutely* unpardonable. There is forgiveness for all kinds of sins, even for blasphemy against the Son of God!—but not for the sin against the Holy Spirit. If the Holy Spirit of God openly and demonstrably works so that a blind mute who is demon possessed is wonderfully enabled to see, speak . . . if *then* people say that this is attributable to the devil, well, it is time to say something about the fact of the unpardonable sin.

There is some difference of opinion as to whether Jesus was saying that the Pharisees had actually committed the sin against the Spirit or whether He was warning them about the possibility of doing so. Calvin, rightly, we think, assumed that they had by their blasphemy committed the sin. H. Bavinck, peerless Reformed theologian of the first quarter of this century, left this an open question. He regarded it as most likely that Jesus was giving the Pharisees a final warning. The real question at this point is whether it can be said of anyone in this life that he has irrevocably sinned the sin unto death. We will return to this question later.

What is the sin against the Holy Spirit? This definition is, I think, helpful:

The unpardonable sin is a denial in spite of better knowledge of the truth, or still worse, a declaration that something which is obviously heavenly is actually satanic. (Translated from Honig, *Handboek van de Gereformeerde Dogmatiek*, p. 403.)

With various writers we draw these conclusions with respect to and from Matt. 12:31, 32:

- a. The blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is preceded by a process of hardening.
- b. This process is caused by an unwillingness to bow before the preaching which calls men to self-examination and conversion, a summons which the hearer may not dismiss as trivial or rooted in untruth.

The unpardonable sin, therefore, consists of a *deliberate blaspheming* of the Son of God in terms of that Holy Spirit of God who works in Him and through Him. It is indeed a sin against one's own conscience and against his better knowledge. It is a sin which goes so far as to render its perpetrators

worthy of the accusation that they are, in effect, allies of the Evil One.

And then there are those passages in the Book of Hebrews. Rightly, we feel, these texts have been placed in context with those that speak of the sin against the Holy Spirit.

Heb. 10:26 speaks of a certain *wilful* sinning which places one outside the circle of Christ's sacrifice for sin, and therefore beyond all possibility of forgiveness. Heb. 10:29 follows the statement (vs. 28) that in the O.T. dispensation a person was put to death without possibility of appeal if two or three witnesses declared him guilty of transgressing Moses' law. It goes on to say that if that was the case then, what would be the punishment for one who has "spurned the Son of God, and profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and outraged the Spirit of grace?" (RSV) Heb. 6:4-6 states that there is an apostasy, a falling away from the faith after knowledge of the "goodness of the Word of God," even after having been "partakers of the Holy Spirit" which places one beyond the possibility of repentance and restoration.

Prof. Berkouwer, however, feels that we ought not be too quick to assume that these passages refer to the sin against the Holy Spirit. He points to the fact that the unique, specific element in the description of that sin (blasphemy of the Spirit) is not mentioned. Berkouwer is not saying (*De Zonde*, II, pp. 114, 115) that there is no relationship whatsoever between the Hebrews passages and those in the Gospels, but he does feel that the fact that the sins mentioned in the Hebrews are conscious and deliberate and against better knowledge is not enough to establish them as unpardonable. He concludes that this sin is only to be understood in terms of contradicted evidence. The contradiction of the evidence for the claims of Christ exposes a heart so unbelieving and so apostate that it merits Christ's most awesome warning concerning the unpardonable sin (op. cit. p. 118).

A very good definition of this sin was offered by Herman Bavinck when he wrote that the sin against the Spirit is a

conscious, malicious, deliberate ascription of that which is clearly a work of God to the influence and working of Satan, which is therefore a definite blaspheming of the Holy Spirit, a malicious assertion that the Holy Spirit is a demon out of the abyss, that the truth is a lie, that Christ is Satan himself (*Gereformeerde Dogmatiek*, 4th ed., p. 137).

#### 4. The great secret.

Even now it has *not* become perfectly clear just what the sin against the Holy Spirit is.

To that specific question we address ourselves in a second article.

Its difficulty goes without saying! Augustine spoke of it as "the great secret." Other students of this matter are convinced that there is no actual answer, that it must remain a forever insoluble problem.

We owe it, however, to any serious-minded Christian who has deep concern and real interest at

this point to attempt an answer. Pastors do meet people—perhaps not as often as formerly—who are deeply troubled by the thought that they may have actually sinned the sin which is unto death.

It was Klaas Schilder who said several years ago that if there were only a few who could still struggle with such things that they, too, deserved sympathy and consolation.

We agree.

## SHOULD WE MAKE PICTURES OF JESUS CHRIST?

ONE CHRIST  
SON OF GOD — SON OF MAN  
ONE GOD,  
THE FATHER AND THE SON  
AND THE HOLY SPIRIT

“THOU SHALT NOT MAKE UNTO THEE ANY GRAVEN IMAGE, . . .” (Ex. 20:4)

Mr. Stefan Trenev is a Bulgarian who with his wife, Johanna migrated to the U.S. in 1967, became a Christian in 1971 and joined the Christian Reformed Church at Alameda, California, in 1976. He is a mechanical draftsman/designer. As a relative new-comer to our churches, he raises the question whether we over the years have not come to err in accommodating a practice which neither the Scriptures, nor our creeds formed in the Reformation's return to the Scriptures, permit.

I am concerned about our church's involvement in making and using pictures of the Lord Jesus Christ in our Sunday School material, Baptism certificates, books, wall-pictures, etc. This practice is in direct violation of the Word of God. Let us now examine if this is so:

Deut. 4:15-16, 23-24

“Take ye therefore good heed unto yourselves; for ye saw no manner of form on the day that Jehovah spake unto you in Horeb out of the midst of the fire; lest ye corrupt yourselves, and make you a graven image in the form of any figure, the likeness of male or female.”

“Take heed unto yourselves, lest ye forget the covenant of the Lord thy God, which he made with you, and make you a graven image, or the likeness of anything, which the Lord thy God hath forbidden thee. For the Lord thy God is a consuming fire, even a jealous God.”

Rom. 1:23

“and changed the glory of the incorruptible God for the likeness of an image of corruptible man, and of birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things.”

### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Throughout the period of history recorded in the Bible, God did not once use pictures, illustrations of God—Christ. Such images, (illustrations) were rejected by Him, because they misrepresent Him and deny HIS way of teaching HIS people.

History tells us that the early church until about the fifth century was free of images, pictures of Christ.

In the sixth century pictures of Christ were already quite popular and the church had another battle to fight. It was a very serious controversy; the church split into two groups:

“Iconoclasts”—those against the pictures of Christ, and

“Iconodules”—those for the use of pictures of Christ.

Each group declared the other to be heretical. Many lives were lost in the fight; finally in 843 A.D. the “Iconodules” won the battle, proclaiming those who were against making pictures of Christ heretics, and promoted the use of images of Christ, Mary and other Saints, who are believed to be “silent sermons,” “books of the illiterate.”

In the 16th century “the radical Reformers (Carlstadt, Zwingli, Calvin, Knox) renewed the iconoclastic theory. They removed, in an orderly way, the pictures from the churches, judging them as favoring a refined species of idolatry and hindering a spiritual worship.” (History of the Christian Church, Vol. IV, § 100 by Philip Schaff)

Those who were fighting for reforming the church renewed the battle against images of Christ. They wanted a pure church, and with this desire in their hearts, they wrote these statements concerning pictures of Christ:

### Heidelberg Catechism: Lord's Day XXXV

96. Q. What is God's will for us in the second commandment?  
A. That we in no way make any image of God nor worship Him in any other way than He has commanded in His word.
97. Q. May we then not make any image at all?  
A. God cannot and may not be visibly portrayed in any way, although creatures may be portrayed, yet God forbids making or having such images if one's intention is to worship them or serve God thru them.
98. Q. But may not images\* be permitted in the churches as teaching aids\*\* for the unlearned?  
A. No, we shouldn't try to be wiser than God. He wants His people instructed by the living preaching of His Word—not by idols that cannot talk.



## Larger Catechism

(issued by the Westminster Assembly  
in 1649 in England)

109. Q. What are the sins forbidden in the second commandment?
- A. "The sins forbidden in the second commandment are, all devising, counselling, commanding, using, and in any wise approving any religious worship not instituted by God Himself: the making any representation of God, of all, or of any of the three Persons, either inwardly in our mind, or outwardly in any kind of image or likeness of any creature whatsoever. . . ."

### The Second Helvetic Confession, A.D. 1566 (Swiss)

#### Chapter IV, Of Idols; or of Images of God, of Christ, and of Saints.

"We do therefore reject not only the idols of the Gentiles, but also the images of Christians. For although Christ took upon Him man's nature, yet he did not therefore take it that he might set forth a pattern for carvers and painters. He denied that he came 'to destroy the Law and the Prophets' (Matt. V. 17), but images are forbidden in the Law and the Prophets" (Deut. IV. 15; Is. XLIV. 9).

John Calvin on pictures of Christ:

#### INSTITUTES OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION, BOOK FIRST, CHAPTER XI

"We must hold it as a first principle, that as often as any form is assigned to God, His glory is corrupted by an impious lie.

"But God makes no comparison between images, as if one were more, and another less befitting; he rejects, without exception, all shapes and pictures, and other symbols by which the superstitious imagine they can bring Him near to them.

"Hence it is manifest, that whatever statues are set up or pictures painted to represent God, are utterly displeasing to Him, as a kind of insults to His majesty."

#### WE MUST NOT AND CANNOT MAKE PICTURES OF GOD

In Deut. 4:15 the Lord is commanding us not to make any image of Him and from this we understand that in the second commandment we are commanded not to make an image of the ONE TRUE GOD (FATHER, SON AND HOLY SPIRIT).

Moreover, the Lord tells us that we have not seen Him; therefore we cannot make an image of Him. We understand that the only image acceptable to Him is the one that truly represents Him, because the Lord says, "for ye saw no manner of similitude." The Lord tells us that we do not know how He looks and He does not allow us to misrepresent Him. God holds us responsible for the way we present Him. The only true image of Him is the Lord Jesus Christ; any other picture, illustration of God (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) is a lie.

Is. 40:18, 25:

"To whom will ye liken God? or what likeness will ye compare unto him?"

"To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One."

If we make pictures of God they have to be equal to the Creator, His Knowledge, His Wisdom, Glory, Holiness. They have to be living and live the life of God, whose image is Jesus Christ, the Holy One, who is the Word of life, who is the eternal life, who commands the wind, who is the Wisdom, Power and Righteousness of God, who is the Lord of Glory, who said, "...HE THAT HATH SEEN ME HATH SEEN THE FATHER:"

Q. JESUS CHRIST BECAME A MAN. CAN WE MAKE PICTURES OF HIM?

A. To deny that Christ came in the flesh and that He is a true man with a body of flesh, bones and blood is an apostate doctrine. It is also an apostate doctrine to deny that Christ is the perfect expression of GOD'S HOLINESS in the body.

"He that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (Jn. 14:9), no other man can make this statement for himself, NO, NOT ONE, for it would be blasphemy against God.

He is "THE IMAGE of the invisible God," (Col. 1:15)

"for in him dwelleth all the fulness of the GOD-HEAD BODILY," (Col. 2:9)

Christ's life on the earth was most holy, having definite expressions and creating definite impressions in the people who saw Him.

WE OUGHT NOT TO PRESENT CHRIST AND NOTHING CAN PRESENT CHRIST APART FROM HIS HOLINESS.

The LIVING CHRIST is the "VERY IMAGE OF GOD" in the flesh. (Heb. 1:3) When God says that we have "changed the glory of the incorruptible God for the likeness of an image of corruptible man, . . ." (Rom. 1:23), He tells us that this is a sinful misrepresentation of Him. God is incorruptible, meaning not only eternal, but holy, without sin. According to the Word of God we ought not to change THE GLORY OF THE LIVING, INCORRUPTIBLE, HOLY CHRIST for the likeness of an image of corruptible man.

HOLINESS RADIATES GLORY.

"And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth." (Jn. 1:14)

It is also an apostate doctrine to deny that Christ is worshipped (Jn. 9:35-38) as the Son of God as well as the Son of Man, for there is ONE CHRIST, SON OF GOD AND SON OF MAN. And WE WORSHIP ONE GOD, FATHER AND SON AND THE HOLY SPIRIT.

It is a direct violation of the second commandment to make pictures of THE ONE WE WORSHIP.

Q. CAN WE MAKE AN IMAGE OF GOD IF WE DO NOT WORSHIP IT?

A. "God cannot and may not be visibly portrayed in any way." (H.C., L.D. XXXV, A. 97)

The second commandment teaches us NOT TO MAKE IMAGES OF GOD. Our attitude towards images of God or gods that have been made is not to worship them and not to serve them and to destroy them within those places we dwell in and have authority over.

**Q. BUT DO NOT PICTURES FURTHER OUR UNDERSTANDING OF GOD AND HIS WORD?**

**A.** "No, we shouldn't try to be wiser than God. He wants His people instructed by the living preaching of His word." (H.C., L.D. XXV, A. 98). Little children are saved in the same way grownups are saved—by the hearing of the Word of God and faith imparted by the Holy Spirit. Then they become children of God, they are now born of God, God is their Father. God will not fail to fulfil His covenantal promises (Is. 59:21).

Through illustrations (pictures of Jesus) NO ONE EVER WILL COME TO KNOW GOD, NOR SEE HIS HOLINESS, RIGHTEOUSNESS, LOVE, WISDOM, POWER.

On the contrary, this is exactly what we see in the Gospel, for in the Word of God we behold the Lord Jesus Christ.

I Jn. 1:1-3:

"That which was FROM THE BEGINNING, that which we have heard, that which we have seen with our eyes, that which we beheld, and our hands handled, concerning THE WORD OF LIFE (and THE LIFE was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare unto you THE LIFE, THE ETERNAL LIFE, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us:"

Here John, the apostle of the Lord Jesus, is witnessing to us that he has seen Jesus and was in close fellowship with Him. He bears witness of Him by way of writing and telling of Jesus Christ. He uses no pictures and illustrations to preach the Gospel to declare THE WORD OF LIFE, THE ETERNAL LIFE, THE ETERNAL GOD. Christ came in the

flesh, yet John still talks of His very bodily presence, that this is the eternal life, the eternal God. John does not separate the two natures of Christ, even though He preaches the Gospel to LITTLE CHILDREN, "I write unto you, little children," to FATHERS, "I write unto you Fathers," to YOUNG MEN, "I write unto you, young men,". To all age levels He preaches the same Gospel, because the Word of God has the milk and the solid food for the building up of our faith, regardless of what our age and our spiritual maturity is. By writing and telling, this is the way the Holy Spirit portrays Jesus Christ in our hearts and minds, this is how He transforms us to the image of Christ, this is how God impresses the image of Christ upon us.

### TODAY

Pictures are used in the most dangerous places, among our children who are 3, 4, 5 years old. When they see Jesus in pictures, this is to them the Lord Jesus Christ, whom they worship. Grownups can judge for themselves, but children cannot—pictures have been pushed upon them.

This is the time when they are to be fed with the essentials of the Christian Faith, with the milk of the Word of God, when they should learn to walk by faith, not by sight, to worship God in the beauty of His holiness.

But instead, along with the good biblical practices, to them is also presented the familiar face used as an idol in some denominations, and they are told that this is Jesus. To make certain that they get the point, the name Jesus is even printed under the portrait. We bring our children to Sunday School to read the Bible, to pray, to sing praises to the Lord, to have the Word of God expounded to them, to fellowship one with another and declare His wondrous works, TO WORSHIP GOD!

\*German: Bilder—pictures  
\*\*German: Bücher—books

## MARXIST INFLUENCES IN EDUCATION

Peter De Jong

GETROUW, the Dutch monthly publication of the International Council of Christian Churches, in its first issue of 1979 featured J. Boelema's extended summary of an important speech of Dr. A. Troost under the above title. A number of Dr. Troost's sharp observations are as applicable to our situation as they are to that on the European continent. The substance of his talk translated freely from the Dutch, may interest our readers.

ten / july, 1979

## Democratic Western Free Socialism

Marxism appears in many forms, such as Maoism and Stalinism, which may bitterly oppose one another and yet have a close spiritual affinity as they have Karl Marx as their common father. Professor Troost observed that democratic, western free socialism, although closely related to Marxism is a more moderate and less consistent form of it. Communism regards socialism as a necessary transition stage to a communist society. Communism aims to completely rule the world and it presses its crusade toward such a triumph by way of this socialist transition.

## Moderate Methods

The moderate, socialist form of this movement has been influencing Christendom for almost 100 years and it does this especially in the Netherlands today.

About 1900 the "social gospel" movement began in the United States. The expression meant that the gospel was the good news for poor, underprivileged, oppressed, for people whose rights had been denied, and the practical ideals of the "social gospel" readily blended with the socialistic trend of thought. For a short time about 1890 Abraham Kuyper was under the influence of this movement, but from Groen van Prinsterer he learned to see how this socialistic movement drew its spiritual inspiration and nourishment from *unbelief* and *revolution*. Therefore Kuyper came to concentrate his attention on an anti-revolutionary doctrine and an anti-revolutionary view of the state. Accordingly Kuyper confessed that *all authority has an official character, is responsible first to God and must be respected by those who are subject to it, with the reservation that they must obey God more than men.*

### Developments

There have been further developments since Kuyper's time. What the perceptive could already see in the 30s and 40s became more obvious and public in the 50s and 60s. The *principle of authority* lost its faith-foundation and accordingly also its practical influence and meaning. Barthian theology which dominated those years followed Karl Barth in preparing the way for spiritual and military disarmament against Marxism and communism. While after the second World War some Christians deserted the Christian political parties, now Dr. Troost observed an opposite movement in which socialistic mottoes and ideals are being adopted by Christian parties.

### Spiritual Forces

In this curious development, Dr. Troost observed the work of spiritual forces. These forces operate like the wind which irresistably moves the tops of the trees in one direction until the upper parts of those trees grow to conform to the direction of the prevailing wind. Besides this constant infiltration of communism in the Netherlands as well as in the whole western world, one must also observe the rapid *undermining, weakening and secularizing of Christendom*. One need not understand this as a loss of all faith, but rather as *emaciation, as political unproductiveness of faith*. This is not caused by modern theology, but, on the contrary, *modern theology, like the modern socialistic politics of Christians, is the product of derailed, undermined and anemic spiritual life.*

This also accounts for the weak defenselessness against socialism and the naive readiness to receive and to follow socialistic catch-words and programs on the part of theologically orthodox people and Reformed churches.

### Democratizing

Although some of the extremes and sensationalism of the protest movements have passed, the struggle with their ideas continues. Experience has shown that the Marxists are most successful when they operate under the slogan of "democracy".

Many no longer recognize the enormous difference between the "democracy" promoted by *unbelief*, in the French Revolution and the Christian principle that *official authority, as established by God, must be respected*. Many Christian politicians and educators have also forgotten this distinction. Nobody wanted to be labeled "conservative" and therefore all were for democracy. In this way the catch-words of the anti-authoritarian education have been constantly propagated. All order, discipline and achievement were caricatured by generalizing from faults or abuses. The results were that many teachers and parents became unsure of their course. This uncertainty has been encouraged in every area of life and among Christians, especially in matters of faith and morals.

### Application in Schools

Prof. Troost called attention to examples of this movement in the schools. Children were taught to admire the Soviet paradise, which must not be called Russia, but the Soviet Union. Education must become democratic. Sex Education was required and made as explicit as possible; Pornographic films must be observed because they covered up nothing and if parents objected, this could be held against the children. The principle implicit in all this was that *changing society must begin in the elementary schools.*

### Criticism of Society

Along with "democratizing", "social criticism" and "social change" are also magic words with which socialism everywhere breaks into churches, schools, universities and even conservative political parties. Our society is obviously no good. Nobody is happy with it. One must keep hacking away at that dissatisfaction. Change must come, change of mind and change of structure. Marx taught that society is divided into free and oppressive relationships. Western Europe is still a repressive society and it must change. The defenders of this repressive social system are naturally the authorities in state, church, the army, etc. Everyone who is not in an established position is automatically oppressed, mistreated, plundered and humiliated. A group of "critical educators" worked this out in a brochure entitled "*Authoritarian Education*". It maintained that the educational establishment is authoritarian and conservative and is a willing servant of the repressive class of capitalists, and that the students are the great mass who are being denied their rights. Lesson plans are prepared for them. They must obey established school rules. They are dependent on the good will and whim of the teachers. The students are the purpose of the education. They are the product that must accumulate more knowledge in the learning process. They are compelled to submit to the process which does not depend upon what they want to know or what is really important to their development. Most students know that they must pass the examination in order that their school education may be properly recognized by society. Therefore the student regards it as to his advantage

to study the educational materials in order to pass the final examination which gives access to a higher position in society. And so the fetters are locked on him. He has identified himself with the educational system. Teachers as well as students are in fact being exploited. They are not doing what they have themselves considered and come to recognize is necessary for the welfare of society or for their own development. Will they ever recognize that they are being sacrificed? Certainly not, as long as they have not experienced that the reformation of education is important to all teachers and students. Until that time they will emphasize the positive points of the existing education and will defend it because otherwise they could give no explanation for the fact that they have been involved in this education. Only people who have come to understand the reason for the present educational problem, can see what must be reformed. This is the line of the socialistic educational "reformers".

*Society is authoritarian and is directed by the great conservative, economically advantaged classes.* The brochure goes on to describe how the reformation must be achieved. It is by way of action to elicit conflicts and protests, for it is only by way of conflict that the students and teachers become aware of their slave-status. The "Red Book for Students" advises, "Go with your demands — which you call petitions — to the administration. If they give in, your demands were not important enough to justify action. If they deny them, then you are where you must be. You gain nothing by talk."

This method has been enormously successful in the universities. A student paper said, "*On every approval of a demand we must have a new one ready*".

Speaking from experience, Prof. Troost observed that it is saddening to observe that administrators are so unimaginably fearful of conflicts and unbelievably concessive to the demands of students. Actually this is not surprising because they themselves have been misled by the unbiblical preaching of reconciliation, community, solidarity, service, humanitarianism, etc. They have undermined their own authority and on the first or second confrontation with the revolutionary leaders they have given up their authority and turned it over to the dictatorship of the so-called democratic majority.

### Free Discussion

When the first phase of the revolution has succeeded the second arrives. In schools and educational institutions the contents of study must be "democratically" determined. Any further talk of an authoritarian relationship between teacher and student is out of question. There must be open discussion without anyone because of his position being permitted to say what is or what must be.

It must first be agreed, however, that every department must be freed from its social uselessness and made fruitful for the changing of our capitalist society. The critical teachers already mentioned wrote that in the present school the students and teachers are told from above what they must do. The teachers carry out the education laws and re-

quire the students to submit to them. The testing of their factual knowledge by way of examination rounds out the oppression.

What is ideal? Students and teachers will *together* determine what they must do. It is obvious that they will work with more pleasure and interest when they themselves determine what they do. Assigned studies and factual tests can be dropped as illegitimate means of oppressing the students.

Another citation: The repression by authorities must make way for *self-government*. In this way workers in education will not work for the school, but for life. This kind of developing *social consciousness* by consistent use of language can be used to poison the intellectual atmosphere, Dr. Troost observed.

Marxism knows only one fundamental antithesis: *The opposition of the oppressors to the oppressed.*

The spiritual and military resistance to communism is undermined by an alliance between Christendom and socialism, accompanied by numerous ecclesiastical and communistic action-groups. Communism is making steady and patient progress toward governing the world in the game played by ignorant and short-sighted leaders, by what is called *the betrayal of the intellectuals.*

### Need of an Active Campaign Against Marxism

Dr. Troost proposed to his hearers that Marxism, also in its moderate forms of all kinds of socialistic tints of pink and rose, remains in the first place a *power that is an enemy of God.* In opposition to the true salvation of God, given us in Christ, it preaches a doctrine of salvation that promises to deliver more socially than Christ does with all of his fine promises of eternal salvation. Instead of the totalitarian rule of Christ the Marxist doctrine of salvation preaches the totalitarian rule of *man.* This rule of man, led by a prophetic elite with a socialistic doctrine of salvation, by means of the totalitarian power of government, must then be called the "Kingdom of God" by Christians. Today we must recognize, according to Dr. Troost, a spirit of error, which God has brought as a judgment upon apostate and secularized Christendom. It is this spirit of blindness which has made possible the present-day alliance between a demoralized Christendom and a moderate Marxism. This alliance seems, on one hand, to restrain and delay the coming of anti-Christ, and, on the other hand, cannot prevent his coming because opposition steadily weakens and territory is steadily being lost (to it).

Theological error and church decay promote the present spiritual decline of western culture as much, if not more, than the practical materialistic greed and craving for pleasure of the great mass of people who become indifferent and blind to this spiritual struggle. The struggle demands cross-bearing and following Christ in His sufferings.

### A Desire for Salvation

In conclusion, Prof. Troost said that all people in the world suffer the consequences of the break with

God, sin. That is the cause of all suffering and misery. Therefore *all* people too long for salvation consisting of peace, joy, freedom, wellbeing, the flowering and fulfillment of life. The Bible describes that salvation. Mankind, apostate from God, intends itself to achieve this on the basis of good will and proper means.

The great error of a steadily more socialistic Christendom is the assumption that these goals are the same for all and that they can be achieved in the same way as the Marxists expect to achieve them.

Throughout the world the lie has been accepted that Marxism is connected with freedom and righteousness and that Christendom is connected with oppression and exploitation.

Now the last point has in part been true. Can Christendom with its external worship and theology, its enormous ecclesiastical institutions and cathedrals, and its great theological libraries and learning help us? The Only One who can help us is Christ. Therefore we may pray with the prophets, "Turn us, O Lord, and we shall be turned".

### Bearing on Our Educational Problems

Reviewing the speech of Dr. Troost, one observes that a number of his comments on the Dutch situation appear to apply also to ours in North America. Especially striking is his highlighting of certain common educational ideas whose socialistic or even Marxist affinities we do not usually recognize.

I cite an example from the February-March issue of the *Christian Educators Journal* (pp. 6ff.) in which Mr. Harrow Van Brummelen writes on "Teacher Training in our Christian Colleges: Is Improvement Necessary?" and a professor from Calvin College and one from Dordt College reply. Mr. Van Brummelen, Education Coordinator for Christian Schools in British Columbia, after visiting more than a hundred classrooms with 2,500 students, is especially

critical of the way in which many of the teachers still use a structured, orderly, disciplined, traditional class-room procedure instead of the informal, relaxed, open, less-structured arrangement, adapted to the child's individual "needs" and "creativity".\* Professor Peter De Boer, Chairman of the Education Department of Calvin College, replies to Mr. Van Brummelen rather defensively, that Calvin College tries to teach a variety of teaching methods including substantially those which Van Brummelen advocates. In the same magazine Professor Mike Vanden Bosch of Dordt College's department of Education calls attention to the obvious bias of Van Brummelen's criticism, and to the opportunity which the unstructured classroom provides not only for the good student to study but also for the poor student to squander his time. He recalls one memorable lecture by a seventh-grade teacher which provided guidelines for his own years of future study which would likely never have been discovered by any student fumbling at research on his own. He points out that the resentment against any "teaching" because it implies "authority" is derived from an anti-Christian philosophy. Christians ought to recognize God-given authority to teach. And he observes that education with a well-considered direction is much more apt to go somewhere than one which opposes any direction.

This exchange in the *Christian Educators Journal* clearly shows how secular educational theories with Marxist or other anti-Christian affinities are at work also in our Christian schools. We must prayerfully and patiently oppose them and seek to bring up our children in the "training and discipline of the Lord."

\*Mr. Van Brummelen wrote in a similar vein in his essay in the 1972 *Wedge* (AACS oriented) book, *To Prod the "Slumbering Giant"* which I reviewed in the January, 1974 *OUTLOOK* in an article, "Where are We Going with Christian Education?"

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## Response to Gospel Preaching

Paul De Koekkoek

### Personal "Application"

In *Christian Home and School* (March, 1979) Dr. Wolterstorff, professor of philosophy at Calvin College, notes that some students of our Christian schools do not appreciate the school that taught them, that they even feel resentment against these schools. He holds that to prevent this, the kingship of Christ and its implications should be stressed. Teaching that may develop closeness between the Savior-King and the students, with closeness between teacher and student.

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That makes one think of disloyalty to our church in some places, and ask the question whether our people, especially ministers, elders and deacons impressed the congregations with the value and merit of our church prior to the departure of those who left. With the preaching of sound doctrine, has there been a follow-up of "personal application"? To ask the question points to the answer: there has been a lack of that in much preaching. To this lack I call attention in this paper, along with an admission of my own delinquency in this matter.

I. There is need of "application" in, and at the conclusion of the sermon; a need for the question to be pressed, "What does this mean to you?" True gospel preaching is challenging and makes an appeal; it demands an answer: there must be a "yes" to the Christ of the gospel. Christ may not and cannot be ignored. Jesus Himself worked and spoke in terms of challenge, of confrontation, and call for personal response. Paul (when there was trouble in Corinth) wrote two letters of correction, with the admonition, "Examine yourself whether you are in the faith" (II Cor. 13:5). Today there is among us also a

great need for confrontation, questioning, counseling. The question, "What does the truth of the sermon mean to you?", should not be neglected.

II. This challenging "application" is often lacking in today's preaching. Exegetical preaching is a must, but there is a danger in objectivity that leaves a person cold. The hearer is left cold when conviction is stated, but with little outspoken desire to share. All this leaves a void. The congregation is not aroused to personal spiritual activity. There is no inventory of personal spiritual capital. The preacher should aim at the correction of this lack of spiritual self-consciousness. I do not call for undesirable self-centered pietism, mysticism, or emotionalism, but for a healthy self-consciousness.

III. This is with me a matter of experience, both in the pulpit and in the pew. In my first preaching the application was lacking. In my first church, I was reminded of this by the venerable Rev. J. Keizer, who preceded me there. After my Christmas sermon on "Jesus, Servant of Rome but Lord of the World," I was reminded of "het behoeftig volk" (the needy searching souls.). Fifty years after my ordination there, I visited the same church. Then and there I heard a sermon which amounted to a dogmatic treatise on an article of our creed; this with total absence of any call for personal inventory. Membership in my former church went down. Complaint was made at the "higher" church council, but... In Otley, Iowa, the consistory requested more "application." "You are a teacher, but not a preacher." In Edmonton a deacon told me that my talk at the mission meant more to him than my sermon in church. I also noticed that many had a preference for catechetical preaching (as did my wife, Lena). A Roman Catholic immigrant liked my sermon on L.D. I: "What is your only comfort..." After that, practical application became a matter of course in my preaching when I served as immigrants' minister in Canada, 1949-1956. People at that time were troubled by low wages, poor housing, intermittent preaching services, and resultant homesickness. There also was need of a practical approach when I was serving in Tacoma among the servicemen (and their wives) of Fort Lewis and the airbase.

At Classis I mentioned the great need for application for the man in the pew in the preaching of our ministers which is otherwise sound. I also mentioned this need to several guest preachers who nearly all admitted their shortcomings in this respect, with thanks for the reminder.

I personally need the reassuring comfort of the "official" preaching: Scarlet and crimson sins become white as snow and wool, for you too (Isaiah 1:15). (This subject was discussed in my article on "Christian Wretchedness" in the *Outlook* of February, 1978.) As our churches are losing members, especially young people, could it be that these have not been sufficiently personally confronted, challenged, rebuked and/or comforted?

However, with this emphasis on "application" I would also emphasize that there must be something to apply; there must be substance (textual) to the preaching. Speaking the Word with inescapable au-

thority, and that in love. The Author of this is the Holy Spirit of whom Jesus said: "He shall glorify me, for He shall receive of mine and shall give it unto you (John 16:13-15). He is the One who makes *rapport* between the Word, the preacher and the believing soul... The Servant of the Holy One of Israel "shall not break the bruised reed and the smoking flax shall He not quench..." (Isaiah 42:3).

Therefore, my recommendation is: Sound, exegetical preaching, but with pertinent "application" for young and old.

Dwell in me, O blessed Spirit,  
How I need Thy help divine;  
In the way of life eternal,  
Keep, O keep this heart of mine.

## THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST

### Our Unique Mediator II

Jerome M. Julien

The Church has always confessed that our Mediator "is *very God* and *very man*: Very God by His power to conquer death; and very man that He might die for us according to the infirmity of His flesh" (*Belgic Confession*, Art. XIX). Of this confession, Charles Hodge wrote:

Here the subject might be left. All the ends of the spiritual life of the believer, are answered by this simple statement of the doctrine concerning Christ's person as it is presented in the Scriptures. False explanations, however, create the necessity for a correct one (*Systematic Theology*, II, 386).

Therefore, it is necessary that we go one step further. We must see that our Mediator is God and man in one person. This part of our study is more complex. In fact, it is one of the mysteries of Bible Truth. Nevertheless, we can say some things about this truth — and we must.

To get as clear a picture as possible of this truth we will be considering it in two installments. First, we consider the mystery of this truth and the precise statement of it. Next time, we will consider more fully the nature of this relationship which has been called the "Hypostatic Union".

III. Our Mediator is God and man in one person.

That is, indeed, a mystery. How our Mediator can be God and man in one person is beyond us. There has never been a birth like that one in Bethlehem and there has not been one like it since. He is unique. There is no one with whom He can be compared. All we can say is, "And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness" (I Timothy 3:16).

This mystery is important. Though we cannot begin to plumb the depths of how our Mediator is

this unique person, we are still called on to answer the relevant question of Scripture: "What think ye of Christ?" In answering this we must be as precise as possible because every Christian truth really depends on the doctrine of the Person of Christ. How we answer the question has far-reaching implications. Even the missionary activity of the Church will be in trouble if the wrong answer is given. Without a proper Christology God's salvation will not be proclaimed. You see, the Christ who is preached must be the Christ of the Bible.

John Owen (1616-1683), the great Non-conformist leader and writer of the Puritan age, wrote:

It is of great importance unto our souls that we have right conceptions concerning him... (the) knowledge of his person (is) the foundation of all the rest, wherein if we mistake or fail, our whole building in the other parts of the knowledge of him will fall unto the ground" (*Works*, Goold edition, I, 223).

How our Mediator is God and man in one person is impossible to explain. Many attempts have been made at explanation and these have brought great trouble to the Church. The reason for this is simple: man with his finite mind cannot begin to analyze and explain the infinite God. This is impossible. Any attempt at explanation can open the door for heresy. This has already happened!

The early centuries of the Christian Church were battlegrounds over the doctrine of Person of Christ.

Arianism was condemned by the Council of Nicea in 325 AD. The Arians admitted the pre-existence of Christ, but believed that He was not Divine. He was only the *best* man who ever was. While the present Nicene Creed which we use is not the original statement written in 325 AD, it adequately expresses the doctrinal position decided on by that Council. The Council decided that the proper understanding of Jesus is that He is "the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds; God of God, ... very God of very God; begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father ...".

In 381 AD, another council was called — this time at Constantinople. Two erroneous views of Christ's person had to be condemned. Semi-Arianism was one. This heresy conceded that though Christ did not have the same nature as God, he had one like God's. The other heresy condemned was Apollinarianism which did not do justice to the human nature of the Mediator. It taught that though Christ had a complete human nature, the Divine "logos" — a word used by John (1:1, 14) meaning the Second Person of the Trinity — took the place of the human soul.

Still there was controversy. It took another seventy years to attain doctrinal stability over Christ's person. In 451 AD, the Council at Chalcedon was called. There, a monumental statement on the two natures and the person of Christ was written. Followers of Nestorius were proclaiming that the Mediator has two persons. Followers of Eutyches were proclaiming that there was no distinction between the two natures; they were fused together. In answer to all this came a very precise statement

which, among other things, clearly defined the faith of the Church as being in

one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ; the same perfect in Godhead, and also perfect in manhood; truly God and truly man... consubstantial with the Father according to the Godhead, and consubstantial with us according to the manhood... to be acknowledged in two natures, inconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably, the distinction of natures being by no means taken away by the union, but rather the property of each nature being preserved and concurring in one Person and one Subsistence, not parted or divided into two persons, but one and the same Son and Only begotten, God the Word, the Lord Jesus Christ...

While we do not often read these words, words similar to them appear in one of our creeds — the Athanasian — sections 29-36.

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## *Meditation*

# Searched and Known by our Wonderful Lord

John Blankespoor

**O Jehovah, thou hast searched me and known me. . . . Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me and know my thoughts; And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting (Ps. 139: 1, 23, 24).**

O Jehovah, Thou hast searched me and known me. So David begins this beautiful confession. Notice by all means that he addresses God as Jehovah. This is His covenant name. He is the wonderful, faithful Lord. It is the Lord's searching and knowing that is the main thought of this well-known psalm.

Often this psalm is quoted as proof for God's omnipresence in this big world. That this is true, no Bible-believing Christian denies. But that is not the main thought of this psalm. This psalm speaks about God's wonderful attitude and relationship with His people. As Jehovah He surely has no special saving relationship with all men, still less with unbelievers. As Jehovah He is the self-existent Rock. In Him there is no change. He is the God of wonderful salvation in Jesus Christ, being full of tender mercy, pity, and kindness towards His people. When Jehovah searches and knows us, He does so with a keen interest of love.

The word search used here means that God has a keen interest in His people, He looks into their lives, He watches over them, scrutinizes very carefully what they are doing, where they are, and what their needs are. It reminds one of a mother and a sick

child. How that mother constantly watches that child, hears almost every move of the child in the crib. Even during the night that mother sleeps lightly, always remembering that needy child. "So", says David, "Jehovah searches and knows me". Tremendous!

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Beginning with the second verse David applies this to his own life. No, he doesn't mention the big things in life, when e.g. his life was saved from Saul, when he ascended the throne, when he experienced special deliverances from troubles. This is what we often do and that only. When we have been sick, had adversity, perhaps lost a dear one, then we speak of God's faithfulness. But we forget Him in the common things of everyday life. David here speaks of sitting down, lying down, getting up, and what not. Stop to think what this means regarding millions of people, in their activities each day, one works here, another goes there, a third one is traveling, and so on.

Life is full of variety and activity, working, going, sitting down, sleeping, and doing a hundred and one things. But, says David here by implication, my Lord knows where I am, daily. He knows me and every move I make. Daily and every moment of the day He is interested in me. He is acquainted with all my ways.

Wondrous love of Jesus Christ!

Is there anything in my life that is too small for Him to be concerned about? Of course not. Incredible as it may seem, Jehovah knows my thoughts from afar. And who doesn't have a thousand thoughts and cares every day in this busy life? Sometimes it is too much and we become nervous, tense and anxious. As our heavenly Father, however, the Lord is aware of everything that is going on, watching intently and as it were, He lays His hand upon our shoulder to encourage us. What a blessed Lord we have. Indeed, such knowledge is too wonderful for us; it is high, we cannot attain unto it.

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But David's thoughts are not yet exhausted. In His mind he now goes into the big world. Previously he was busy only with our little lives. But now, is there any place in this large world where Jehovah cannot find us or be at our side? If for some reason or another we would ascend into the heights above, He would be there; or if for some strange reason we would descend into the depths, let us say into the ocean, we also there would find the Lord at our side. One perhaps may draw the conclusion that already then the Holy Spirit inspired David to give comfort to Christians living in the twentieth century who travel in planes, or go on space flights or descend into the darkness of the earth or sea in submarines or mines.

Take this psalm with you, and read it when you must bid farewell to a dear one. Read this inspired word when you are concerned about a dear one, far away from home, or in special need. And we never

have to be afraid, for even in the dark the night shall be light around us because the Lord sees and knows us there, too. With Jehovah the night shines as the day, the darkness and the light are both alike to Him.

One is reminded of Paul's words later: I am persuaded that neither death nor life... nor any creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Jesus Christ our Lord.

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Being so overwhelmed with this truth of Jehovah's providence for His people, David asks himself when this began. When did the Lord begin taking such an interest in us? The answer is tremendous! And so beautiful! This Lord covered us even in our mother's womb. It all means that there never was a time when this great God did not search and know us. Before there was anything of us — imagine, of our bodies — His eyes were already upon us.

Don't try to understand this, you can't. Simply believe it with childlike faith. One thought leads to another in the psalm. David no doubt thinks of the marvels of creation as he thinks of a new-born baby. And there is an outburst of adoration in his soul: "I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Marvelous are Thy works". All kinds of questions can and do arise in our minds about the creation of our wonderful bodies. But the final answer to every question is this, "I am fearfully and wonderfully made".

As times goes on, such children grow up. Many are their experiences in life. But in them all the Lord searches and knows us. And why the Lord makes so many distinctions between His children, the one being chastised every day and the others given a much lighter burden, we don't know. Always the answer is, "It is too wonderful for me". But this we know, Jehovah searches and knows us. Finally we become old, and the infirmities of the body increase. Finally we die and breathe our last. But the Lord will always know us and be watching over us in love. And when we awaken on the other side, we will still be with Him. Never will we be separated from Him and His love.

In all this we see a little of the amazing riches of the child of God. With this truth we have everything, without it we have less than nothing.

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The result is that David wants to hallow that glorious name of His Lord. Being in this frame of mind and being overwhelmed with the love of this wonderful Lord, he sees the wicked. They know something about this God, but they blaspheme and curse His name, the name of our wonderful and glorious God. A reaction sets in with David. He is grieved with those who rise up against His God. And he hates them with a perfect hatred. One has to be very godly and live on a high plateau of faith to be able to say this with David. Our personal enemies we must love, but a deep love for God and for the sanctity of His blessed name can bring us to the

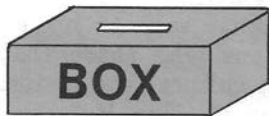


point of having this kind of hatred of God's enemies. We often find this in the psalms.

But this is not the last word. David knows Himself, that his "old man" is still so sinful and O so deceitful. He wants the Lord to continue to watch over Him always. He wants to continue to experience this wonderful comfort of the knowledge of the Lord for him. But he also knows that this will not take place when he lives in sin. Therefore it is his prayer that if need be the Lord will try and test him. And if there is any wicked way in Him, that the Lord will bring Him back and lead him in the way everlasting.

David did not know the Heidelberg Catechism. But He did know the blessed truths it expresses in the well-known words, "My only comfort is that I am not my own, but with body and soul both in life and death I belong to my faithful Savior Jesus Christ." No, he didn't know the catechism, but He did know this Lord. And he gives expressions to some of his thoughts and experiences of knowing this Lord. That's what Ps. 139 is about. ●

## OUR QUESTION



### "What Is Christ's Kingdom?"

Harlan Vanden Einde

From an Iowa reader comes the question: "Is the cosmos Christ's Kingdom?" I am sorry that the reader did not elaborate any further on the intent or background of that question, for that would have been helpful in answering it.

It seems to me that there are two primary words that need definition before we attempt an answer: "cosmos" and "kingdom". First of all, the word "cosmos".

There are several New Testament Greek words that are translated "world", such as *oikoumene*, denoting the populated world (Luke 4:5), and *aion*, which is often translated as "age", though it also frequently combines the concept of time and space (Heb. 1:2; 11:3), and *kosmos*, which contains the thought of order or system. The latter occurs most often in the New Testament, and may refer to the material world (Rom. 1:20), the totality of heaven and earth (Acts 17:24), the sphere of intelligent life (I Cor. 4:9), the place of human habitation (I Cor. 5:10), mankind as a whole (John 3:16), society as alienated from God and under the dominion of Satan (I John

5:19), and the complex of ideas and ideals which govern men who belong to the world in this ethical sense (I John 2:15-17; James 4:4).

In its main use among the Greeks, *kosmos* was used to refer to the universe, because that word was expressive of the order found in it. On the other hand, the Hebrews thought more in terms of the heavens where God dwelt, and the earth which was for human existence. God created both, and the regularity of the movements of the heavenly bodies and the pattern of the seasons gave witness to His creative wisdom and the power of His sustaining control. The New Testament writers followed the pattern of Old Testament thought, and very seldom did they use the word *kosmos* for the heavens and the earth combined. Most often they used it to refer to the earth, and thus to mankind who dwelt on the earth.

A careful reading of the New Testament reveals that the word *kosmos* is often used in the sense of evil. That is particularly true in the Johannine writings, where the "world" is presented as something hostile to God. That may be explained by the fact that the powers of spiritual evil, of which Satan is the head, dominate the life of unredeemed humanity in this world. Since Satan's kingdom is of this world, and stands in opposition to God's kingdom, anything "worldly" became associated with evil.

Now, "is the cosmos Christ's kingdom?" If we mean by that, "is the world, the world of evil, as it so frequently is used in the New Testament, and as it stands in opposition to God's kingdom, is that Christ's kingdom?", the answer is "no".

What does the word "kingdom" mean? To be brief, the word "kingdom", or the phrase "kingdom of God" or "kingdom of Christ", refers to the rule of God, the divine kingly authority. This divine authority and rule was given by the Father to the Son (Luke 22:29). Christ does exercise and will exercise this rule until He has subdued all that is hostile to God. When He has finally put all His enemies under His feet, then He will return the kingdom to His Father (I Cor. 15:24-28), and it will become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ (Rev. 11:15), "and he shall reign for ever and ever."

In this sense, yes indeed, the whole cosmos is under the authority of the Christ. Over that world which is marred by the love of evil and in the sinister hold of Satan, God is still sovereign. Satan's kingdom exists by permission, and not by reason of divine helplessness. God has worked a glorious reconciliation for that world (II Cor. 5:19), whereby through faith in His Son, people may be transferred from the realm of darkness into the kingdom of God's Son. There they enjoy the blessedness of forgiveness and eternal life, while those who are not so transferred will share the fate of Satan.

What a tremendous privilege it is to be among those who shall some day join voices with "every created thing", saying, "Unto him that sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb, be the blessing, and the honor, and the glory, and the dominion, for ever and ever" (Rev. 5:13). ●

## THE FINAL EXAM

Laurie Vanden Heuvel

We have recently passed the time of year for final exams when students of all ages draw together the various strands of acquired knowledge so that they may give an account of that which they have learned.

Some schools and teachers have abandoned the practice of giving final exams, choosing rather to evaluate student progress on the basis of class attendance, projects and papers. There is something commendable about this type of evaluation and yet, it seems to short-change the student in two ways.

It robs the student of the opportunity to draw together the bits and pieces into one cohesive *whole* which gives him the opportunity to see the "forest as well as the trees." Naturally any student can do this on his own initiative. But human nature being what it is, most students will never do this unless they are under pressure to do so.

Secondly, the absence of a final exam tends to decrease the amount of effort a student puts into the learning process. When a student knows beforehand that he must give an account of what he has learned, he will be more faithful in attendance, more exact in taking notes and more diligent in preparation.

What applies to education also applies to spiritual life. There is nothing more certain in life than the fact that there *will be* a final exam for every human being who has ever lived. God has made man a rational being, able to make choices. He has given man *responsibility* and for that He requires *accountability*.

But God's final exam will be different from school exams. In school exams, the student tells what *he* knows about the subject. In God's exam God will tell us what *He* knows about us. Every thought, word and deed of ours will be exposed and God will sit in judgment. Many will try to impress the Judge with all their fine works: "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name and in Thy name cast out devils and in Thy name done many wonderful works?" Then Jesus, the Judge, will say, "I never knew you. Depart from me . . . Not everyone that *says* to Me 'Lord, Lord' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he that *does the will of my Father* which is in heaven will enter."

Unlike the exams we receive in school, there is no set date for God's final exam. He makes no appointments with us. He will come as the "thief" — suddenly and without notification. He will come during a time of "darkness." But it will not necessarily appear "dark." I Thessalonians 5:3 says that at the time of Christ's return people will be saying, "Peace and safety." But spiritually it will be dark as night.

Twilight is already here. The light of scientific and material success is burning brightly. But moral perversion has become a way of life. Evil is being called good and good is being called evil. Even the

church is becoming "dull of hearing." The life styles of many Christians are becoming little different from those of the world. Old "taboos" are being ridiculed and replaced with compromise and capitulation. Bowling leagues are replacing Bible study societies for too many. Televised sports and movies are sapping the evening church attendance. The Word of God is being reinterpreted to "fit" all these changes. "Peace and safety (security)" are replacing prayer and sacrifice for many.

But the Lord, the Judge of all the earth is coming. Are you ready for His FINAL EXAM? ●

## REFORMED OR PRESBYTERIAN?

Noel Weeks

Our Lord taught and prayed that His church and people "may be one" (John 15:11, 20, 22, 23) in relationship with Him through the sanctifying work of His gospel (vss. 17ff.). Therefore we must "believe a holy catholic Church" and pray and work for church union with those who share this faith. While we have to oppose the church unions of believers with unbelievers, as Bible-believing and therefore Reformed Christians we must seek to bring Reformed and Presbyterians who share that aim together and not let cultural and historical differences keep us apart. The Reformed Churches in Australia (and in New Zealand arising out of the post World War II Dutch immigration) have tried to draw Presbyterian and Reformed together by cooperating in a joint seminary at Geelong, as well as in other ways. Some of their experiences with the problems which arise in this interaction of Presbyterian and Reformed may be interesting and helpful to us. Professor Noel Weeks, a correspondent in Australia, has written us about this subject. Dr. Weeks came from the Presbyterian Church of Australia, studied at Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia and received the Ph. D. degree from Brandeis University. He teaches at the University of Sydney and is a member of the Reformed Church of Sutherland (a Sydney suburb). His address is 77 Woronora Cresc, Como West, N.S.W. 2226 Australia. His article is to appear in this and coming issues of the OUTLOOK. (Editor).

The Reformed Ecumenical Synod is an organized form of something that is a major factor in the Reformed world of today: the meeting, interaction and sometimes collision of Anglo-Saxon and Dutch expressions of the Reformed faith. This interaction is not new but has emerged in many new forms today through the migration of many Dutch people to

English speaking countries and the translation of important Dutch thinkers into English. Along with this meeting there have come tensions. Churches like the Orthodox Presbyterian and the Free Church of Scotland have been concerned and critical about developments in the GKN (The Reformed Churches in the Netherlands). In North America there has been a certain degree of polarity: Toronto vs Westminster or Orthodox Presbyterian vs Christian Reformed. In Australia this has manifested itself in differences between the Free Kirk and the Reformed Churches centering around the Reformed Theological College Geelong.

These are merely manifestations of what some see as a fundamental cleavage between Reformed (Dutch) and Presbyterian (Anglo-Saxon) approaches. On either side the accusations are sometimes far reaching: that the Anglo-Saxon mind lacks the philosophical depth to produce great theology; that the Dutch are oblivious to the practical concerns of Christianity like godliness and evangelism; that the other side should be left to their philosophical blindness or ignorance.

### The Ethnic Captivity of the Church

I hope that any serious Christian on either side would be concerned by this state of affairs. Do we accept that there is an unbridgeable gap between those who should be closest together through their devotion to the Reformed faith? Perhaps an even more fundamental question is this: are we so trapped in our ethnic and cultural ghettos that we cannot reach each other and help each other? I would not deny that there is such a thing as a national characteristic. After all, Paul said all Cretans are liars! Perhaps he would say today that the Dutch and the Anglo-Saxons both suffer from the same national characteristic: pride. Should the Dutch who suffered so much from the Nazi theory of racial superiority and are so opposed to Apartheid be so sure that they have a distinctive calling to set the world right on theology? Does the "practical" Anglo-Saxon look so practical when compared with the actual accomplishments of the Dutch in churches, schools, welfare etc.?

We cannot afford the isolation of national pride. Even if we do give to each national group or culture a distinctive calling then we must remember that the perfection of the body requires the proper working of each part together, not in total separation from each other. Yet we must be sensitive to each others' historical shaping. We must be awake to our tendency to be pressed into the mould of our own particular world. It seems to me that there are a number of factors that must be appreciated.

### The Migrant Dilemma

The Dutch that have come into closest contact with Presbyterianism have done so as migrants to English speaking countries. Some of the Presbyterian groups they have encountered have themselves been remnants of close-knit migrant communities like the Free Kirk in Australia. One can observe roughly three stages in the process of

migrant assimilation. The first generation, represented especially in Canada, Australia and New Zealand are rightly impressed by the advantages of the homeland in comparison with the new country. They resolve not to lose the culture of the old in the barren wilderness of the new land. The second generation is inclined to react against this. They are sick of being stigmatized at school as "Dutchies". Within the church the reaction may take the form of rejection of the distinctively Dutch elements or of the whole Reformed faith. Subsequent generations, basically assimilated to their new land can afford the luxury of a sentimental adoration of all things "Scottish" or "Dutch". This is the stage reached by some elements of the Free Kirk in Australia and the CRC in the U.S.

It should not be forgotten that what appear at first as indigenous Presbyterian groups are really refugee groups. The Orthodox Presbyterians, the Free Church of Scotland or the various individuals who have come out of dead and apostate Presbyterian churches to find refuge in Reformed Churches are refugees from the sinking of the once great Presbyterian church. Often they had the experience of being persecuted minorities forced to leave to experience freedom of conscience before God. They are fiercely loyal to that for which they have suffered exile and banishment: the Reformed faith.

In the midst of all these sociological and psychological pressures, is any working together of Reformed and Presbyterian meaningful? The answer I give to this question is significant because it is consistent with the answer I will give to later questions. Our belief in the transforming power of Word and Spirit makes us reject the notion of the sociological captivity of the church. Communion is possible because Scripture judges all tradition. That does not mean it is easy, because here we are fighting against a form of conformity to this age.

### Our Great Revival

In the Anglo-Saxon tradition, especially in its English version represented particularly by the Banner of Truth Trust, there is a nostalgic longing for the return of the days of Whitfield. Those with this perspective are inclined to look rather sceptically at the Dutch interest in Christian political parties etc. "Would it not be more sensible", they ask, "to convert the nation rather than trying to start a Christian party in a nation made up predominately of unbelievers?" This very scepticism is seen in turn by some of the Reformed as proof that the Anglo-Saxons have a "pietist" interest in evangelism to the exclusion of the establishment of the kingdom of Christ.

In neither case is the matter quite so simple. The Evangelical Awakening in which Whitfield and other Calvinists played a part was a *national* affair. Directly and indirectly the politics and society of England were profoundly affected. The evangelical crusades for social reform of the nineteenth century had their roots in the revival of the eighteenth. The English Reformed fascination with revival is not a

denial of the relevance of the gospel to all of life. It is rather a desire for the return of the days when the gospel had such far reaching effects. Yet herein lies the danger. Will God always work in the same way? The same question might be asked of those who long for the return of the glorious days of Kuyper. Both English and Dutch are looking for a repeat of that glorious period in which the gospel rocked and transformed their nation. The danger is that they expect it to come exactly as it did in the past, either through the mighty revival or through Christian social and political organization. What if God were to raise up a second Whitfield but in the Netherlands and a second Anti-Revolutionary Government, but in England?

Are we guilty of absolutising our own historical experience as though God must bless us as he has done in the past? Now there may be other reasons, to be touched upon later, for opposition to the notions of revival or of Christian political action. For the moment let us urge men to proclaim the gospel and to be Christian, really Christian, in their political lives.

(to be continued)

## Drugs & Our Kids

John H. Piersma

### (Editorial Note:

*The following interview with a Christian High School principal appeared in a recent issue of a Christian Reformed Church parish paper. We think that it is definitely worth re-publishing! The problem discussed is not imaginary or over-exaggerated. And the discussion is of a very high quality.*

*We have asked Rev. John H. Piersma, one of our regular contributors, to add a footnote to this interview. We have tried to make it very difficult if not impossible to identify the school or the principal, for obvious reasons.)*

This recent interview with Mr. \_\_\_\_\_, principal of \_\_\_\_\_ Christian High School, was conducted for the purpose of educating and informing adults concerning the problem of drug and alcohol abuse among today's teenagers, especially those students entrusted to the care of our Christian homes. It is our prayer that this information will stimulate communication between parents and children.

**Editor: Does a drug and alcohol problem exist at \_\_\_\_\_? What percentage?**

**Principal:** A problem does very definitely exist. The percentage of drug users or experimenters is difficult to guess, probably 30% of all students have tried marijuana.

Alcohol is a bigger problem because it's more acceptable to parents. I'd guess 50-60% of all students, including girls, have tried alcohol. I define a drug and alcohol problem as those who use the substances at least once a week. The students are not always the problem, just the use in itself is the problem.

**Editor: What kind of drugs are most widely used?**

**Principal:** Marijuana is the most popular drug. There is also use of angel dust, a substance mixed with a liquid and then drunk. I'm not aware of any LSD or heroin being used.

**Editor: Are drugs easily obtainable? Where?**

**Principal:** Most students say they can get \$20 worth of marijuana in half an hour. This isn't true for adults because they're suspected of being "narcs". "Indian Woods" and roving teen-age hangouts like fast food drive-ins and bowling alleys are the easiest places to establish contacts.

**Editor: How do you spot drug users at \_\_\_\_\_?**

**Principal:** There are several indications of drug use: a drastic drop in grades, hanging around town at night instead of doing homework, dropping out of student activities and developing difficulties with parents. We make every effort to control cigarette smoking in the parking lot. Although the smell of marijuana is easily detectable, it is often hard to prove who's responsible.

**Editor: How do you deal with drug users/pushers at \_\_\_\_\_?**

**Principal:** The official school policy is 'student possession and/or use of illegal drugs results in suspension from school until student, parents and administrator can meet.' After the initial meeting, the Education Committee has in every case suspended that student for the rest of the quarter with no credit.

Pushers have been expelled (permanent). A meeting with parents and local police department is arranged.

The above only applies to students who carry on these activities at school.

**Editor: Why, in your opinion, is the use of alcohol so prevalent among teenagers?**

**Principal:** Several reasons — 1) The media has made alcohol the "In-thing". It's chic. 2) Parents do it, so why not? 3) Peer pressure has great effect. 4) It's an almost acceptable thing to do in our society.

**Editor: Do you think the lower age limit (18) is related to teenage alcohol abuse?**

**Principal:** I am personally in favor of a 21 age limit for buying alcohol. The chance of 16 and 17 year olds buying liquor is then greatly reduced. It is a proven fact that automobile accidents involving teenagers have increased since the lower age limit.

**Editor: With whom lies the greater responsibility? School or parents? What is the role of the church?**

**Principal:** From my point of view, I would say the parents. The child is God's gift to the parents. The school is an educational institution to *assist* the parents in the training of the child. The parents are responsible for the student at night, the school is *not*.

Parents first cause certain attitudes in the student, respect of law, respect for parents, and respect for the body. The school reinforces these attitudes. The church's responsibility is to constantly reinforce the relationship of the student with Christ and how that relationship works out in life. It is very difficult to confess Christ while under the influence of drugs or alcohol. Actually, it's impossible. A personal opinion here. If a student from \_\_\_\_\_ gets caught using marijuana or alcohol, it would be just as fitting to say that a member from some CRC got nailed. The school has no more to do with it than the church. It again comes down to an attitude problem. Kids who are into the marijuana or alcohol scene usually have a poor self-image from which this bad attitude develops.

**Editor: What advice do you have for parents?**

**Principal:** 1) Sit down and talk to your child. Don't beat them up or throw them out. Ask *why* it happened.

2) Get more involved with the student. Show interest in his projects or school activities. This will enhance his self-esteem.

3) Check your kids — Where? With whom? What kind of activity? Invite your child's friends over.

4) If your teenager has a party — BE THERE! It's the greatest deterrent to illegal activities.

If the parents aren't there, the peer pressure becomes extremely great on all the kids to join in and be "with-it". *Don't leave your teenagers alone while on vacations or get-away weekends because you're inviting trouble.*

One more thing — If parents are aware of unsupervised parties, it is your responsibility out of Christian love and discipline to inform the other party. Not to get involved is an admission that you don't care the problem exists. Lack of involvement is an endorsement to continue that kind of behavior.

**Editor: How do parents react when they find out that their child is involved in a drug or alcohol problem?**

**Principal:** Parents are generally the last to be aware of the problem. When they do find out, they are first shocked, then angry, then embarrassed for themselves, and, then, they have an important decision to make. They must ask themselves, "Does love include discipline?" Their actions must be based on the answer to that. Sadly enough, some parents opt for no discipline at all.

Final comments: This school is concerned with the whole drug problem. We attempt to discuss the problem in chapel, freshman science, family living class, etc. Why don't you parents do the same thing? Ask your student if they've ever experimented with drugs or alcohol. You don't solve the problem by hiding it. It's there! You must remember you're

dealing with young students in today's society and pressures. We must pay much more attention to the influence of the media over a long period of time.

One more thing — we have many students involved in worthwhile activities. We always hear about the "bad stuff" — let's remember to stress and work on the positives as well.

**Footnote:**

1. It is obvious that the school and principal in question are doing all in their power to resist and eliminate this dangerous and sinful practice! I think that we ought also to be sure to realize that it is very difficult to detect and to apprehend students involved in drug abuse. One of the very serious reasons is, as suggested in this interview, the existence of an unbelievably strong "peer pressure" among our Christian young people, as well as the adoption of an impenetrable code of silence. It has apparently become very dangerous socially and even physically for students in today's high schools to report transgressions of this sort. In my judgment, this is really a wicked concession to a non-Christian lifestyle! At West Point cadets are honor-bound to report any infraction of the Academy's code. It would seem that a similar appreciation for the integrity of the army of the Living God would demand of us the kind of responsibility for each other which will help every one in the battle against sin and Satan.

2. I believe that the principal's emphasis upon the primary and indispensable task of the parent in this day of moral crisis is right. Neither he, nor I, would, I'm sure, care to join those who blame everything upon parents. It is really alarming, however, to find parents who do not know what their children are doing, who are governed by the attitudes and laxities of others in their determination of parental guidance and regulation, and, in some case, who demonstrate very little real concern in the whole situation! Winter vacations, week-ends away,\* etc. are very pleasant, of course. I have seen too many instances, however, in which these are enjoyed without the kind of concern for the welfare of children which we as Christians ought to be willing to demonstrate — even if it means that we give up the trip!

3. Much might be said about "the drug culture" and about *the meaning* of drug abuse. I like the things that have been said by people like Francis Schaeffer and Jay Adams. The OUTLOOK ought to devote space to a Christian and biblical understanding of this evil development! It seems to me that the problem does indeed "sneak up on our parents" — as indicated above by the principal. We are often a very fortunate and very busy people, deeply involved in our work, our churches and schools, our friendships, and it is very hard for us to believe that the influences of this modern and very wicked world are as prevalent as they might be for our youth! The advice in this interview is good: be knowledgeable and be concerned!

4. Today's young people are not inferior morally or intellectually or spiritually to any other generation. In fact, in many ways they often demonstrate

superiority, due in part to improved educational and cultural opportunities. Their athletic teams play better, their student choirs sing better, their social poise is often very evident, and their ability to make their way in society is amazing. This is not to say that their age does not have special and very pressing problems! May we list a few?

a. They reveal at times a loss of direction and purpose. This is not difficult to explain in a society which is God-less, materialistic, sensuous. Their age is avowedly irreligious, which means that one has really only two options for worship (and worship we and they must!): self and sex. To that age we of the older generations have often revealed more indulgence than resistance. How obvious is our need to hear the Word as it urges, "Seek ye first the Kingdom...."

b. They evidence the results of over-indulgence in good things. As a Christian teacher recently wrote, How do you interest children in school work when they have just returned from a trip on dad's 45 foot yacht? Even our so-called poorer families often place at their children's disposal things once regarded as totally outside the realm of possibility. There is much boredom and a kind of malaise which leads to trouble. It seems as if there is little realization of the truth that life is a calling from God, and that its patterns, goals, standards must be set by Him and learned from His Word. Our Christian cultural insight and practise must catch up with our financial and social success, or our children will be the victims.

c. The school here discussed is NOT located in Northwest Iowa. Let me say, however, that even in our smaller and rural communities this problem is present.

d. PLEASE PRAY FOR OUR YOUNG PEOPLE!

*\*Not a blanket approval! J.H.P.*

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## ACTIVITIES IN CANADA

Peter De Jong

### Young People's Bible Camp

The Reformed Fellowship gladly calls attention to some of the activities of its Canadian affiliate. The first is a Young People's Bible Camp, Monday through Friday noon, August 27-31, 1979, at the Cedar Glen Conference Grounds at Bolton (near Toronto), Ontario. The subject of the conference is to be "God's Word, God's Church and You". Rev. Harry Bout, Mr. Arend Kersten and Rev. Harry Van Dyken are tentatively scheduled as speakers. Cost is to be \$100 which covers everything except transportation and bath linen (towels). \$25 should be sent in with reservations (before August 1) which will be issued on a first come, first served basis, up to a limit of 66. Young people 16 and over are invited. Mail reservations to Mr. G.J. Van Daalen, 242 Elmhurst Dr., Rexdale, Ont. M9W 2L8. Beside the meetings the conference will provide a variety of activities including horseback riding, swimming, hiking, sports, etc.

### New Publications

We also call attention to two new publications of our Canadian affiliate:

**Justification and Liberation** by Norman Shepherd of Westminster Theological Seminary, is a 24 pp. booklet including Dr. Shepherd's Reformation Day analysis of the "Liberation Theology", which originated among Roman Catholics and is influencing many uncritical Protestants. Dr. Shepherd's writing is clear and helpful and deserves wide reading.

**Four Essays on the Confessions** is a larger 26 page collection of writings on the creeds. It includes "The Origin and Function of the Confessions" by Neil Pronk, Pastor of the Free Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, "The Contents of the Confessions" by Professor Herman C. Hanko of the Protestant Reformed Seminary of Grand Rapids, "Living the Confessions" by Peter De Jong, your OUTLOOK editor, and "Do We Need a New Confession" by Professor Johannes G. Vos, Emeritus Professor of Bible of Geneva College, Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania. This publication intends as Rev. Harry Van Dyken in the preface points out, to promote understanding and appreciative use of our creeds especially in view of the way in which they are being minimized and attacked under the influence of the "new Hermeneutic". The cost of the latter booklet is \$2.50. Both may be obtained from the Reformed Fellowship of Canada, 1244 Talbot St., St. Thomas, Ont. N5P 1G9.



**THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES ON CHURCH GROWTH**, by Harvie M. Conn, Editor. Reviewed by Rev. John G. Van Ryn.

Through the efforts of Dr. Donald McGavran and others of the School of World Mission at Fuller Seminary, Church Growth has become the focus of much attention in mission circles. Terms such as "winnable people," "homogeneity," "people movements" have become common. In March, 1975 over 50 people gathered at Westminster Seminary for a consultation on Reformed Mission and the Theology of Church Growth. This book is a product of that consultation. Whereas it does not provide an in-depth critique of Church Growth theology, it does provide some insights into this theology. These insights are given by several of our Reformed men including E. P. Clowney, J. I. Packer, R. Recker, J. M. L. Young, R. S. Greenway and A. F. Glasser as well as Dr. Conn. All of the contributors reflect their Reformed commitment by their confidence in the sovereign God who is building His church, extending His kingdom and saving His people. They also emphasize that this sovereign God holds us responsible to work wisely. This book is recommended to those who are concerned for the progress of missions and the growth of the church.

**THE EVANGELICAL RENAISSANCE**, by Donald G. Bloesch. 1973. Wm. B. Eerdmans Co. Paper Back, 165 pages. \$2.95. Reviewed by Renze O. De Groot, Ph.D., Emeritus, Grand Rapids, Michigan. D. Bloesch is Professor of Theology at the Dubuque Theological Seminary, and this book written six years ago is an urgent call to Evangelicals.

In the present resurgence of religious interest, the author sees both opportunities and pitfalls. In the *Preface* he says: "The true church will forever stand *against* the stream of culture," and add to the question, "What must we do to be saved?" the question "What ought I to do, now that I am saved?" Evangelical Christians, he says, "must not isolate themselves from other Christians." But, "the new Social Gospel movement undoubtedly errs in confusing a just society, instituted by social engineering, with the Kingdom of God." "Ecumenists fail to see social problems in the light of eternity." "It is my hope that Spirit-filled Christians will stay within the

church and seek to be a leavening influence." "There is also a time to separate" . . . "as a last resort" . . . but, deemed as a sign of failure (to reform) and therefore an act that calls for divine forgiveness."

The book contains three chapters on Evangelicalism: its resurgence, its present-day form, and its hallmarks. In chapter four Bloesch gives a reassessment of Karl Barth in rather favorable terms, and chapter five extols the Legacy that we have inherited from Pietism, especially if we will include with it, the "kindred" movements of Puritanism and Evangelicalism. Thereby the author develops a wide range of tenets to which, he says, Pietism subscribes — even including Social dimensions of Pietism. In comparing Pietism with Fundamentalism Bloesch finds the rootage in the former, including Protestant scholastic orthodoxy, and also dispensationalism, which mainly accounts for the sectarian and separatistic character of Fundamentalism.

The Pietists, claims Bloesch, contended for doctrinal fidelity, as well as personal piety, but they tended to overemphasize "subjective faith" by gazing too intently upon their sins, instead of upon the Christ who atoned for sin. Nevertheless, Pietism contributed greatly to those true elements of the Christian life . . . "Praise of our lips, and sacrifice of our lives" (Heb. 13:15, 16). It contended that the highest kind of Christian practice is Missions. Evangelism has the priority, though social services is the inevitable corollary.

This book would have us see the increasing relevance of Pietism for our day, and for present Evangelicalism. "Violence is more in the heart, than in the streets." "The new kind of man needed, is one renewed by God." "He is God's new creation, and the final answer to the social problem is the new birth." On this spiritual note the author concludes this valuable resume of the trends in contemporary evangelical Christianity.

**THE HERITAGE OF JOHN CALVIN**, edited by John H. Bratt, Th.D. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, Mich. 1973. 222 pages, \$5.95. Reviewed by Rev. Jerome Julien, pastor of the First Christian Reformed Church, Pella, Iowa.

This volume contains twelve lectures delivered between 1960 and 1970 at Heritage Hall on the Campus of Calvin College. Delivered by men well-known in their fields of study, the subjects range from topics concerning Calvin, himself, to his labors in the areas of missions, to worship, to the application of Calvinism. They are of varying interest, but all of value for anyone interested in Calvinism.

Several chapters stand out. Those concerning worship are enlightening in these days. The two about missions should shed some light on this little known work of Calvin. Often Calvin is pictured as a hard man. If you think so, read "Calvin and Toleration" by Paul Woolley. There is a chapter on the development of congregationalism as a form of Church government.

One striking chapter is entitled, "Arminius as a Reformed Theologian." How can this be said? Well, the author, Carl Bangs, has a very broad definition of "reformed."

This book gives a smattering of many different ideas about Calvin and Calvinism. Without becoming too detailed many points of interest are transmitted to him who reads. Those who could not hear any or some of the lectures can now benefit.

**STUDIES IN EXODUS**, by F. B. Meyer. 476 pages. Kregel Publications, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49501, \$9.95. Reviewed by John Vander Ploeg.

To anyone not yet familiar with this *Devotional Commentary on Exodus* by F. B. Meyer it may seem strange to recommend this book as especially apropos reading for today. And that for two reasons. First, because Exodus is an Old Testament book recording the history of Israel in the wilderness in a time in the hoary past. And second, because this is a 1978 reprint of a work by F. B. Meyer of more than a half century ago.

But, for all of that, this is a book that fills a pressing need for this very hour. Why? Because whoever will take the time to immerse himself or herself in what is here found will gradually become captured by deep reverence and profound awe as Meyer portrays the all-glorious presence of and the astounding works of the great God of Israel and the experiences of His servant Moses.

Consider the following as an instance of Meyer's vivid and gripping description of God appearing at Sinai for the giving of the Ten Commandments: "It must have been a great spectacle on that third day. The dense clouds veiling the mountain-peaks and riven with lightning! The thunder like the rattle of an army of angel drums or salvos of heavenly artillery, announcing the approach of God! The furnace flames that cast a lurid light upon the scene! The thrilling notes of the trumpet 'exceeding loud! Only once again will the ear of man hear that resonant voice, 'for the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the Archangel and with the trump of God, for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed' " (p.224).

This lofty style and awesomeness found throughout Meyer's *Exodus* is a wholesome antidote to the cheap and easy intimacy with the Almighty that so many in our day display as they rush in where angels fear to tread. In a human court we do not address the presiding judge except as "Your Honor" and we do not address the U. S. Chief Executive in the White House except as "Mr. President." Surely then, it is an abomination to the Lord of hosts if we dare to enter the Holy of holies and address Him as if He were no more than our next door neighbor Mr. Jones and as if we are free to converse with Him as equals. As well as I recall, it was J. B. Phillips who gave one of his books the significant title, *Your God Is Too Small*. Horizontalism in our conversing with God is a grievous offense to Him and those who fear the Lord will seek Him only along the vertical line. Meyer's *Exodus* is a precious example of what our attitude ought to be. The book is permeated with an atmosphere of sublimity that is conducive to worship "in beauty of holiness."

About Moses, so prominent as God's servant in Exodus, Meyer writes such lofty and beautiful lines as these: "We cannot see the lily growing out of the filthy pond without instinctively being led to desire to be clean. We cannot see a long line of snow-clad Alps, rising from the valleys where mists and miasma lurk, without desiring to climb up and stand amidst those eternal snows. What a tribute to the magnificence of this man's character who thus presented God to the people! As long as they had Moses they had been clean, he restrained them, and was a barrier against a tide of filth" (p.420).

Having read all of this book for personal nightly devotions and having been blessed in so doing I heartily recommend it to others for this purpose. The book of Exodus means more to me now than ever before. Meyer's book also offers seed thoughts galore for the minister who may wish to preach a series of sermons on Exodus. The jacket is right: "You will find this a fresh spring that will splash to an overflow of blessing to all of those whom God brings into your life."

Sorry to have to add this, but it would be less than honest to fail to append to this hearty endorsement that, for this reviewer at least, here and there a stricture is to be noted. On page 220 greater clarity is needed in the treatment of God's covenant with His people then and now. We demur in reading: "The days of the first chapter of Genesis, by general consent, may be reckoned as aeons, and represent in Apocalyptic vision the majestic steps up which creation advanced . . ." (p. 405). And on page 408 Meyer resorts to a spiritualizing of God's work on each of the six days not in keeping with the rules for good exegesis. The discerning reader will take heed even in the case of a book as good as this.

F. B. Meyer (1847-1929) was an evangelical pastor who served seven churches throughout England, he was President of the National Federation of Free Churches (1904-1905), a leading Keswick speaker, an ardent social worker, and for many years a friend of D. L. Moody. In his *Studies in Exodus* he has left evangelicals a precious legacy that may be read with no small profit.

**WHAT ABOUT NOUTHETIC COUNSELING? A Question-and-Answer Book With History, Help and Hope For The Christian Counselor**, by Jay E. Adams,

**Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., Box 817, Phillipsburg, N.J., 1976; 91 pp, paper. Reviewed by Rev. John G. Kruis, Sussex, N.J.**

Both friends and foes of nouthetic counseling have had some very serious objections to and apprehensions about certain aspects of this method. You too? If so, this would be a good book to get for a small price.

In this book Adams, at the ten year juncture in nouthetic counseling, succinctly answers many of the main questions and objections people have raised repeatedly. He clarifies his position and removes many misconceptions.

Adams also, in an abbreviated form, sets forth some of the basic principles of biblical counseling. He includes his informative and challenging address on "Counseling And The Sovereignty of God." This was given on the occasion of his inauguration as Professor of Practical Theology at Westminster Seminary in October, 1975.

**THE HOMOSEXUAL CRISIS IN THE MAINLINE CHURCH**, by Jerry R. Kirk, 1978; 191 pages, paper. Thomas Nelson Inc. Publishers. Nashville & New York. \$3.95. Reviewed by Rev. John G. Kruis, Sussex, N.J.

The homosexual crisis with which the author is concerned in this book was the proposal coming before the 1978 General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church to approve of the ordination to the ministry of known practicing homosexuals. Although the author deals especially with this specific issue and crisis the book can be of great interest and value to us in other denominations who are and will be facing efforts to turn the church from a biblical stand on ecclesiastical and moral issues.

Jerry Kirk gives a very persuasive appeal, especially to leaders in the church, to stand up and be counted, to rise to action, for the glory of God, the purity of the church and for the sake of those who have been brought into bondage to sin. As he does so, he is really at the same time bringing to our attention important principles which should guide and motivate us as we face the issues today. For example he says, "The real crisis is: God's Rights . . . God's rights as creator and Redeemer are infinitely higher than our human rights. He is the one who initiated His relationship with man. It is His world and His church . . . Our 'rights' must, therefore, yield to His" (p. 38).

The author gives us very helpful material on the whole matter of homosexuality, its actual nature and causes. He demonstrates from the Scriptures that it is sin — and a sin from which one can be delivered by God grace and power. He also helps us to understand homosexuals as he draws from his broad experience in ministering to them in the gay community in Cincinnati, Ohio. Very interesting and informative!

Valuable also is the author's plea for Christians to work with love and compassion with those who are yet in bondage to sin and those who have been set free but must yet struggle to overcome when they are sorely tempted to return to their former way of life. He again draws our attention to broad principles that must guide us when he says, "When God says such acts are sinful in His sight and contrary to His intention, is it loving for us to tell such persons that their active sexual conduct is not sinful? Should we tell them that it is really okay, and even good? In fact, should we tell them that because it is good and can bless us all, we ought to ordain them? Is this the loving thing to do? I think not. That is sloppy agape, not liberating love. That is careless and shallow love, love without responsibility, love without accountability, love that does not liberate." (p. 73) I'd go farther, and say it is not love at all.

This a good book to have and to give to those you would like to arouse to biblical action as we face the issues in the church today.

**GOLDEN BOOKLET OF THE TRUE CHRISTIAN LIFE, JOHN CALVIN.** (Translated by H.J. Van Andel) Baker Book House. 1975 Reprint. 99 pp. paper, \$1.45. Reviewed by Rev. C. Vanden Heuvel.

The Golden Booklet is a simplified translation of Chapter six, Book III of Calvin's Institutes.

It reads very fluently and you would enjoy reflecting upon its content.

The subjects treated are very practical, like Obedience; the True Imitation of Christ; Self-denial; Patience in Crossbearing; The Right Use of the Present; and The Hope For The Future.

Shut-ins would enjoy receiving a copy. In fact both the younger and the older Christians would be greatly stimulated spiritually by reflecting on what it means to live a Christ-centered life. Heartily recommended.