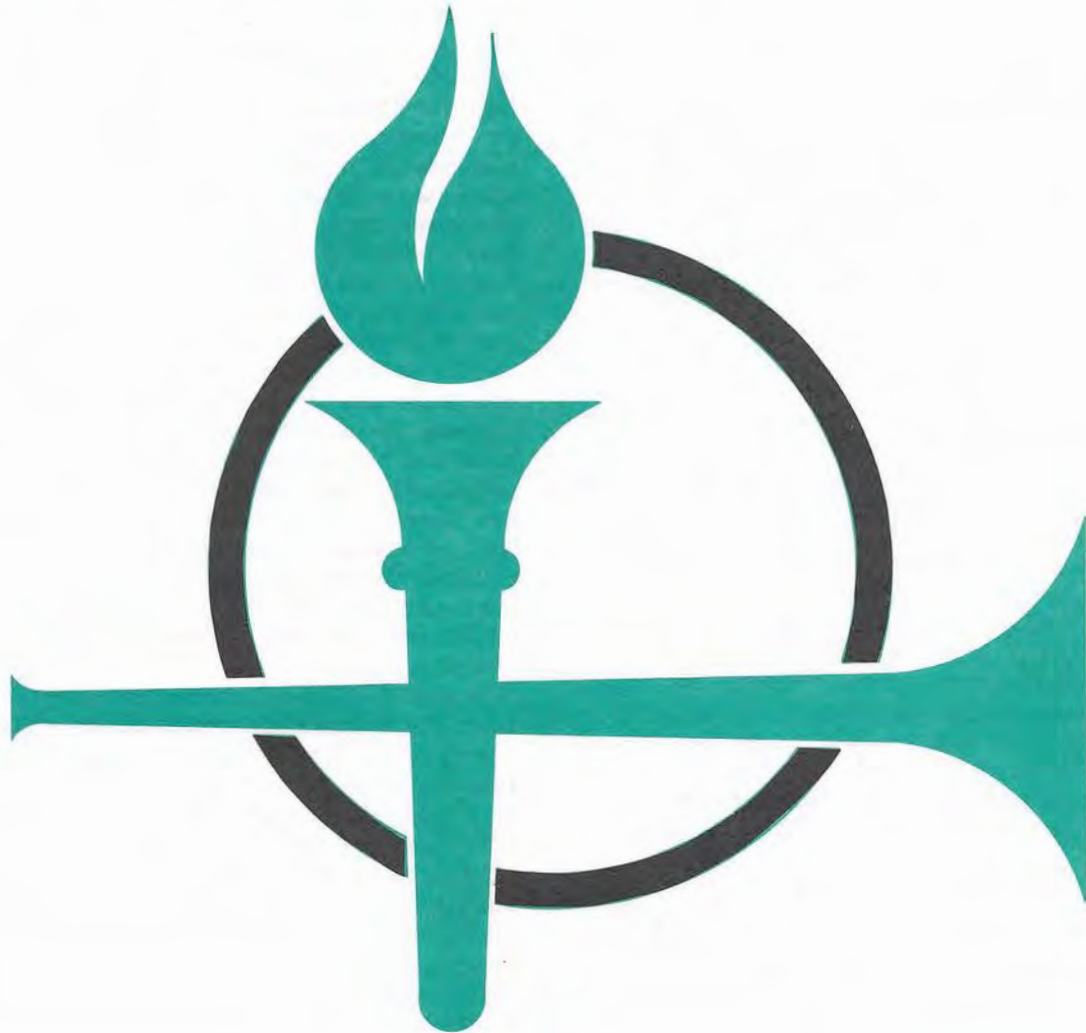


# THE OUTLOOK

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DEVOTED TO THE EXPOSITION AND DEFENSE OF THE REFORMED FAITH

APRIL 1980



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**REFORMED OR CONGREGATIONAL?  
THE REPROBATION ISSUE  
WHAT IS CHRISTIAN EDUCATION?**

# "SEARCHING FOR THE REAL JESUS"

Morris H. Faber

## A Questionable Search

Recently (December 12, 1979) *Newsweek* magazine had a cover article on the subject given above. For us, the subject is uninviting, unwelcome. We feel, do we not, that it is unnecessary to search for the real Christ? All we need do is accept Him as He stands revealed in the Bible. And we also feel that most people who make ado about searching for the real Christ start and end by rejecting Him. And further we find it disconcerting that volume after volume on the subject at the outset undercuts the success of its search by denying the supernatural origin of the Bible.

## Proper Searching

Still we do recognize that there is a place for some kind of search. Simeon was a man who waited for the consolation of Israel (Luke 2:25). The aged Anna spoke to those looking for redemption in Jerusalem. Andrew told his brother, "We have found the Messiah" (John 2:41). Philip said they had found Him of Whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, spoke (John 2:45). And the familiar Isaiah 55:6 exhorts us to seek the Lord. May these cases not be called a proper search for the real Jesus? Perhaps they may, in the sense of seeking and receiving Jesus as He is presented to us in God's own inspired words and then trying to learn more and more about Him. The afore mentioned biblical characters certainly were not seeking an unreal Jesus!

## A Broad Survey

The magazine article is a good one. I say this even though disagreeing with some things in it, unhappily including its main thrust. In expressing this appreciation one thing I have in mind is its comprehensiveness; it covers the field. It states both the liberal and the conservative, the modernistic and the orthodox positions. Though it leans to the liberal and modernistic one, it is fair to the other.

Also worthy of note is the good presentation of the Catholic, Lutheran, and Fundamentalist struggles on the subject. There is no reference made to any Reformed church of today, but none is to be expected in an article so brief as this one. All the more so because in the Reformed Church in America and in the Christian Reformed Church in North America the struggle is on the question of the Bible's inerrancy, infallibility, and authority. In this magazine issue that question is not taken up.

## The History is Basic

Among the article's special statements is this, "Spiritual truths mean more than historical ones." I suppose that the statement is true. The spiritual truth that God is one is more meaningful, surely, than the historical one that last year Christmas fell on Tuesday. However, as regards the Bible and Christianity, it should be remembered that some spiritual truths are based on, and inseparable from, historical ones. For example, Romans 5:6 says, "Christ died for the ungodly." There, "Christ died" is an historical truth. But it is also the indispensable basis for the spiritual truth that He died "for the ungodly." If we do not hold to the connection between those two truths, we lose their entire significance, their spiritual value, and their gospel message. To illustrate this last remark, consider Paul's statement about the historical truth and fact of Christ's resurrection. He says, I Corinthians 15:17, "if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins." No wonder that Peter in II Peter 1:16 emphasizes the fact that he and the other New Testament writers did not follow cunningly devised fables, but were eyewitnesses of Christ's acts and glory.

In line with the above paragraph's content, consider the article's gratuitous observation that "the details (of the Christmas narrative) are . . . fabulous: hearkening angels, adoring shepherds, mysterious star." To scholars these details "are not history at all . . .", we are told. However, all believing scholars have all along insisted that such details are anything but fabulous; that they are, indeed, blessed revelations of facts. And according to the Bible, the Bethlehem star, for instance, is so far from being a fable that it is presented as a necessary fact of history. Necessary because prophetically predicted by Numbers 24:17, "there shall come a star out of Jacob." The prophecy makes the star's appearance a required historical event. Confer, by way of illustration, the statement of John 19:28 that Jesus said, "I thirst." Said verse assures us that He said it because it was predicted that He would. He couldn't even die without first saying that word! The article's error here is in no way rectified, not even mollified, by the statement that "God can reveal himself through inspired fiction . . . as well as through inspired history." The statement may be true enough in the case of Jesus' parables, but God does not prophesy fiction; He prophesies history! Such is the meaning of Isaiah 40:8, "But the word of our God shall stand

forever." Also of Jesus' assurance, "one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled," Matthew 5:18.

### Our Necessary Faith in the Bible

We would object to the downgrading of Scripture implicit in the statement that there were many other writings "regarded as sacred books by the Jews of Jesus' time." In point of fact the Old Testament was considered in a class by itself. No other writings were regarded as its equal. It was at times divided by the Jews into two parts, law and prophets (Matthew 22:40); other times into three, the law of Moses, and the prophets, and the psalms (Luke 24:44). But in both cases all Jews knew what was meant. So when II Peter 3:16 mentions "scriptures" all Jews understood the term. Likewise when Jesus told His hearers to "search the scriptures," John 5:39.

In the course of the article it is noted that Mark's account presents Jesus' miracles as being powerful acts. And that Matthew's, however, presents them as being merciful acts. Surely that difference does not mean any contradiction. Why couldn't the same miracles be described by different terms? Such a variation would show genuineness more than the absence of any differences would. As a matter of fact, in Acts 2:22 Jesus' miracles are collectively given three names: miracles, signs, and powers. The article goes on to observe that the four evangelists "shaded" the stories of Jesus' ministry according to their own interests and theological concerns. The statement is entirely acceptable if one only remembers that any shading done occurred under God's inspiration and hence without contradiction. Also noteworthy is the quotation given from Prof. Carl Holladay that, "Scholars must leave it up to believers to evaluate the claim that (Jesus' works) were really the work of God." Well said! It is indeed a matter of faith, and we believe that Jesus' words and works were those of God.

On its last page the article says, "Defenders of traditional doctrine in all churches are wary of Biblical investigators." I guess so, and the reason for the wariness is that the investigators are oftentimes deniers of Christ's deity and virgin birth. That fact is why the Vatican, questioning the Dutch scholar Schillebeeckx, wanted to know whether he really believed that Jesus was divine. At the conclusion the article makes mention of those "whose faith compels them on the search for 'the way, the truth and the light.'" If we wish to be among those, let us remind ourselves that the Bible presents and teaches not only the search, but also the finding. To others, therefore, let us say John 1:45, "We have found Him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write." And addressing Christ Himself let us say Matthew 16:16, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Not until one says this has he found the real Christ. ☉

*Rev. Morris H. Faber is a retired C.R. Pastor living in Grand Rapids, Michigan.*

# THE OUTLOOK

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

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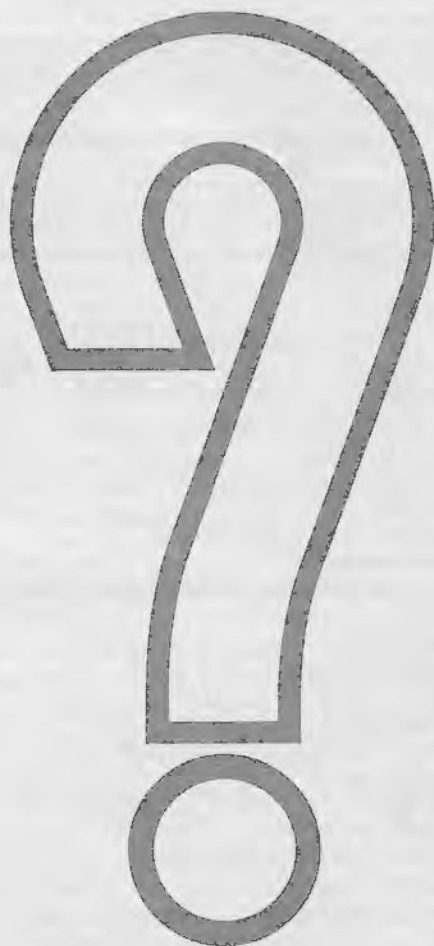
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# WHAT IS CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

J. G. Vos



"Bright as is the manifestation which God gives both of Himself and His immortal kingdom in the mirror of His works, so great is our stupidity, so dull are we in regard to these bright manifestations, that we derive no benefit from them. For in regard to the fabric and admirable arrangement of the universe, how few of us are there who, in lifting our eyes to the heavens or looking abroad on the various regions of the earth, ever think of the Creator? Do we not rather overlook Him, and sluggishly content ourselves with a view of His works?" — John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Book I, Chapter V, Section 11.

By Christian education is meant education of which the basis and unifying principle is the historic Christian view of God, man and the universe in their mutual relations. This historic Christian philosophy finds its most comprehensive and consistent expression in Calvinism, or the Reformed Faith; therefore the most comprehensive and consistent Christian education must be based on, and unified by, the Reformed or Calvinistic view of God, man and the universe and their mutual relations.

## Why is Christian Education Needed?

Why must there be not merely education, but definitely Christian education? It is not primarily a matter of training up young people for Christian service as ministers and missionaries, or for other specialized vocations in what is called "full time Christian service." That is the task, rather, of Bible institutes and theological seminaries, not of ordinary Christian schools and colleges.

First of all, there must be Christian education for God's sake. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God ... with all thy mind" (Matt. 22:37). This command implies that God must be recognized, honored and served in every field in which the human intellect operates. Above and prior to all considerations of human and social needs, there stands the primary obligation for man to love the Lord God with all his mind. This cannot be done through an education which regards God as irrelevant; it requires a frank and explicit recognition of the God of the Bible as the first premise of education. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge" (Prov. 1:7).

In the second place, Christian education is required to give expression, in the educational field, to the radical difference which exists between the two classes of human beings in this world, namely, the

regenerate and the unregenerate. The sin of the human race has had an adverse effect not only on man's spiritual and moral nature, but also on his intellect, his mind. The apostle Paul by inspiration of the Holy Spirit tells us what sin has done to the intellect of man. He states that although men knew God, "they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools . . ." (Rom. 1:21, 22). Sin, then, has darkened man's mind and has made man foolish, however much he may profess to be wise. Only by the miracle of regeneration or the new birth can this damage to man's intellect be removed.

The Holy Spirit's work in regeneration has an effect not only on man's spiritual and moral nature, but also on his intellect; it opens the eyes of his understanding (Eph. 1:18). He begins to see facts in the light of God (Psalm 36:9); that is, he begins to see the true meaning of facts. The unregenerate person, on the other hand, continues to maintain that facts can be understood and explained in the light of man; he recognizes no higher category than the human mind, and he will never admit that his mind has been darkened by sin.

This radical divergence or cleavage in the human race results in two radically different, irreconcilable

philosophies of life. These two philosophies of life may be broadly termed the secular and the Christian philosophies of life. The former is man-centered and holds that man as he exists today is normal; the latter is God-centered and holds that man as he exists today is abnormal (his life having been blighted by sin). These two philosophies of life are as far apart as east is from west. Between them there is an unbridgeable chasm. There can be no compromise or harmony between them, for in the one God is regarded as irrelevant, while in the other God is regarded as all-important.

These two radically different philosophies of life, in turn, must inevitably find expression in two radically different types of education. Unregenerate humanity expresses its own inner principle in secular education; regenerate or Christian humanity must express its own inner principle in Christian education.

The unregenerate person always takes for granted that the God of the Bible does not exist. He may have some idea of a reduced, limited, finite God; but he takes for granted that the God of the Bible and of historic Christianity is not real. He also assumes that man and the universe are self-explanatory — that they can be understood without reference to the God of the Bible. The Christian, on the other hand, must always take for granted that

Rev. Johannes G. Vos, veteran pastor, missionary and professor in the Reformed Presbyterian (Covenanter) Church, to whose labors we devoted considerable attention in the last December's OUTLOOK has had a remarkable career. In an effort to restore and deepen within the denomination an appreciation of the Reformed Faith he began and for 33 years edited and largely wrote a magazine, *Blue Banner Faith and Life*. Because of his waning health its last issue has just appeared and with it a letter of Professor Vos recalling what influence under the blessing of God has had over these many years. He sees indications of "a rising interest in Biblical Christianity that takes the Word of God seriously and does not ask, 'What would I like the Scriptures to mean?' but, 'what do they really mean?'" and evidence of "a rebirth of the true confession in the Covenanter Church as in many others." There are indications of a somewhat similar development at Geneva College at Beaver Falls, Pa., where Professor Vos taught for many years. In *The Book*

*of Books*, a series of essays in Professor Vos' honor, John H. White, the editor says, (p. ix) "Dr. Vos has also been very instrumental in Geneva College's definition, reaffirmation and commitment to a more thorough Christian education. At a testimonial dinner in his honor, President Edwin Clarke expressed gratitude to Dr. Vos for the contribution he had made to the college in this regard, especially in his pamphlet, entitled, "What is Christian Education?" It is this "little pamphlet" singled out for such an extraordinary tribute, that we reprint, with Professor Vos's permission. In times when both interest in confusion about what Christian education is seem to be increasing on all levels from grade schools through college, this careful and influential statement of principles may be helpful also to us and our institutions. Copies of the pamphlet may be obtained (for \$.10) from the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America Board of Education and Publication, 800 Wood St., Pittsburgh, PA 15221.

the God of the Bible does exist, and that He is absolutely meaningful for every fact in the universe.

The secular and Christian philosophies of life cannot be harmonized; both in their starting points and in their conclusions, they are irreconcilable. The one starts with man and the universe, and ends with man and the universe misunderstood; the other starts with the God of the Bible, and attains a genuine insight into the true meaning of reality. There is no area of life in which the difference between the regenerate and the unregenerate does not count. The three great doctrines of God, Creation and Providence must be accepted as the major premise of all study by the regenerate; these doctrines are rejected or regarded as irrelevant by the unregenerate.

There can be no real neutrality as to these three doctrines. The unregenerate person walks around in a dream world. He thinks that facts exist of themselves, and can be adequately explained by human reason alone, without reference to the God of the Bible. The Christian, on the other hand, knows that facts do not exist of themselves, and that they cannot be adequately explained on the basis of human reason alone. The Christian does not believe in what has been called the "just-thereness" of facts. They are created facts, not self-existent facts; therefore they can be really understood only by assuming the doctrines of God, Creation and Providence. God is the reason why facts exist; Creation is the source whence facts exist; Providence is the manner how facts exist.

The unregenerate person also assumes that the human mind is an uncreated mind which exists of itself and is competent to be the absolute and final interpreter of facts. The regenerate person, on the other hand, realizes that the human mind does not exist of itself; it is a created mind and is not competent to be the absolute and final interpreter of facts. The regenerate person recognizes that he is dependent on divine revelation for the ultimate interpretation of the meaning of the facts.

Education, then, must be either on a secular, non-Christian basis, or on a Christian, God-centered basis. To obscure this distinction amounts virtually to abandoning the field to the non-Christian philosophy of life. For the non-Christian philosophy of life is uncritically held — even automatically and unconsciously held — by the great majority of the human race.

The Christian philosophy of life, on the other hand, requires a revolution in a person's thinking — a revolution resulting from the miracle of the new birth. This comes only by the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit in the deep personality of a human being. The tragedy is that even many who no doubt are born-again Christians fail to see the implications of Christianity for life as a whole, and continue to look at man and the universe (including the field of education) from the point of view of the secular or non-Christian philosophy of life. Many Christians, it would seem, have had their souls saved, but their minds remain tangled in the non-Christian view of life.

## Mistaken View of Christian Education

**1. Christian education does not mean education limited to the field of religion.** The idea that Christian education means education limited to the field of religion is held by many people, but it is too narrow an idea of Christian education. Such people seem to think that God is connected only with the salvation of people's souls, and has nothing to do with the world and life as a whole.

We must not limit Christian education to religion. For if we do that we will fail to glorify God in all of life and knowledge. There must be a Christian view of history and economics and politics and physics, as well as a Christian view of salvation and the religious life. God is God everywhere, or He is God nowhere.

**2. Nor does Christian education mean secular education with some religious features externally added.** This is a very common misconception of Christian education, even among earnest Christian people. The common idea of a Christian college, for example, is that a Christian college is just like any other college so far as the study of mathematics, chemistry or English literature is concerned, but that in addition to the regular curriculum the Christian college will have courses in Bible study, daily chapel services, seasons of evangelism, a religious emphasis week, prayer groups, Christian service organizations, and so forth.

These specifically religious features are certainly of great value and importance, but they do not of themselves make an educational institution truly Christian, any more than merely attending church and carrying a pocket Testament makes a man a Christian. By Christian education we do not mean secular education with Christian features added on externally; Christian education means education that is Christian in its essence or inner character all along the line, not only in the chapel and Bible classroom, but in every classroom and every laboratory, as well as in the life and thinking of every teacher.

## The Essence of Christian Education

In order to show how radically Christian education differs from that education which proceeds from the non-Christian philosophy of life, let us consider the essence of Christian education with respect to its source, its standard and its purpose.

**1. The Source of Christian Education.** The source of Christian education is not society as such, but Christian people, people to whom God means everything. Society being predominantly unregenerate and having a non-Christian philosophy of life, cannot produce truly Christian education. A stream cannot rise any higher than its source. Education which originates from the impulse of society, or the public in general, will not consent to take the God of the Bible seriously. It will not agree to the assumptions of God, Creation and Providence on which genuine Christian education must be based. For "the

natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (I Cor. 2:14).

Nor will education which originates from society as such assent to the truth of the damage done by sin to the human intellect, and the resultant need for regeneration, the recognition of which is absolutely basic to any truly Christian view of education. We must conclude, therefore, that the source of Christian education must be Christian people — the regenerate portion of society, who have received the new life-principle of regeneration by the special work of the Holy Spirit in their personality.

**2. The Standard of Christian Education.** A standard is a recognized authority by which something is measured, regulated or directed. The non-Christian philosophy of life finds this standard in society. It speaks of the needs of society, social pressure, social demand, and the like, as the standard by which the character and content of education shall be determined.

The true standard, on the other hand, is the Bible as the revelation of the mind and the will of God. This is the standard recognized by the Christian philosophy of life. To affirm that the true standard of education is the Bible as the revelation of the mind and will of God, does not, of course, mean that the Bible is to be regarded as a textbook on chemistry, mathematics or psychology. But it does mean that the relevant principles of the Bible are normative for every field of study. The Bible has a relationship to every field of life and knowledge, just because God is the real source of all life and knowledge.

The facts of science must never be treated as existing of themselves "in the nature of things;" they must always be regarded as created facts, existing only by the creation and providence of the God of the Bible. The laws of nature must never be regarded as existing of themselves "in the nature of things;" they must always be regarded as created laws, existing by the creation of God and functioning by the providence of God. The human mind must never be regarded as competent to be the absolute and ultimate interpreter of facts; it must always be recognized that in the end it is God who determines what facts mean and how they are related to each other.

God must be the major premise of every textbook. God must be the great assumption in every classroom. God must be the Person whose handiwork is investigated in every laboratory. This means, of course, not some vague or distorted idea of God, but the living and true God, the God of the Bible. "In the beginning God" must be the watchword of all truly Christian education. In textbook, classroom and laboratory the student will learn to think God's thoughts after Him. Unlike the student in a non-Christian institution, he will learn that human thought is never really creative in the strict sense, but always derived from the prior thought of God —

that human "creative" thought is really the unfolding, in man's intellect, of God's eternal decree by which He has, from all eternity, foreordained all that comes to pass in time. What is new to the mind of man is as old as eternity to the mind of God.

This function of the Bible as the standard for truly Christian education further implies two things: (1) Education is more than mere training; it is essentially a matter of enabling the student to attain a grasp of the real meaning of everything — the real meaning of God, man and the universe. (2) Truly Christian education will not be a miscellaneous assortment or hodgepodge of diverse principles and viewpoints, as non-Christian education usually is, but will have a single unifying principle, namely, **that the God of the Bible is the sovereign, active Lord over all reality.**

To this unifying principle, everything will be related. Around this principle, everything will be arranged. The result of this unifying principle will be that the students will not merely acquire a mass of miscellaneous information and insights into various detailed fields, but will gain a consistent, unified view of God, man and the universe, a true and valid philosophy of life — a real insight into what everything is really about.

Secular education is continually groping around for such a unifying principle, but is never able to attain one; truly Christian education has the only really valid unifying principle; while its students may sometimes not acquire as much detailed information as those receiving secular education, at least they will know what it is all about. They will come to realize that it is only in the light of God that man can really see light (Psalm 36:9); that it is only when related to the God of the Bible that anything really means anything. As a well-known Christian philosopher has said, "He who has physics without God will finally have religion without God." If God is not God in the laboratory, then He is not really God in the Church, nor anywhere.

**3. The Purpose of Christian Education.** The purpose of Christian education is the glory of God, and the true welfare of man in subordination to the glory of God. Thus its purpose transcends human society; it is something above and beyond the human race. Only when the glory of God is made the great aim can the true welfare and happiness of man be attained. Where merely human aims such as "social welfare" or "the development of the resources of personality" are substituted for the glory of God, human benefit and happiness will prove illusory.

This transcendent purpose of glorifying God means that the utilitarian demands of society for training in skills by which to earn a living will never be allowed to monopolize the character and content of the curriculum of a truly Christian college or university. The emphasis will always be on giving the student a valid, God-centered view of life as a whole. Courses of a utilitarian character may properly be included, of course. But a truly Christian college or university will not allow courses on such subjects as

salesmanship, bookkeeping and radio broadcasting to crowd out history, philosophy, literature, pure science and religion. In other words, the main emphasis will always be on education rather than on training; the attainment of a unified view of life will be given priority over the acquisition of practical skills.

The purpose of Christian education thus consists in the mandate to glorify God in every sphere of life; every thought is to be brought into captivity to Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 10:5). This means consciously and intentionally to glorify God in every sphere of life, not merely to glorify God unconsciously and involuntarily as a bird or a blade of grass glorifies God. We are to aim at glorifying God in education, as in all other matters. This means that the God of the Bible must be frankly and explicitly recognized as the major premise and end of every educational function.

### **The Religious Features of Christian Education**

Religious features such as Bible study and chapel exercises do not of themselves make education truly Christian. However they are essential to truly Christian education and they are of very great importance.

### **Religious Features Must be Integrated**

In truly Christian education the religious features will be related to the rest of the curriculum and life of the institution not in an external but in an organic way. That is, they will not be merely something extra tacked on, but will be the crowning expression of the entire curriculum and life of the institution. In the history classroom and the chemical laboratory the student will learn to think God's thoughts after Him — those thoughts of God which have constituted history and chemistry what they are. In the Bible classroom the student will learn to think the same God's thoughts after Him, as those thoughts are revealed in His Word, the Bible. Here he will learn the relevancy of God's Truth for his own personal life, as well as for the human race and the world of nature. In the chapel services the student will worship the same God whose thoughts have been unfolded to him in the classroom and the laboratory.

### **Religious Features Must be Orthodox**

The religious features of truly Christian education must always be orthodox. That is, they must be in harmony with the truth of God. In many traditionally Christian colleges today the teaching of the Bible has moved so far from orthodoxy that it is actually worse than useless; it is downright harmful, and would better be omitted altogether. Better not teach young people the Bible at all, than to teach

them that the Bible is full of contradictions, forgeries and errors, a collection of ancient myths and legends, and so forth. Better leave the Bible out entirely than to teach it in the distorted form required by a non-Christian, evolutionary philosophy.

Orthodoxy, of course, implies a standard of orthodoxy. This is properly the standard held as valid by the denomination or group that controls the institution. This does not necessarily imply that all faculty members must be members of a particular denomination, but it does imply that the confessional standards of the denomination are to be regarded as normative in determining what is orthodox in religious teaching, worship and service in a Christian college or university.

### **Faculty Must be Active Christians**

It should be needless to observe that what has been said in this article should not be regarded as a body of abstract ideas. For education to be truly Christian, these ideas must be embodied in the living personalities of teachers and students. The teachers, especially, should be living examples of what real Christian education means. No stream rises higher than its source, and it is not to be expected that an educational institution will rise higher than the life and loyalty manifested by its faculty and administration. Every teacher and administrative officer of a Christian college or university should be, not merely a professing Christian or church member, but a spiritual, active Christian, a person to whom Christ is the object of faith and to whom the Triune God is all-important.

The writer once knew a medical missionary in Korea who had an immense influence. This doctor was the head of a hospital with a staff of doctors and nurses. Besides these there were other employees, including a Korean mechanic-chauffeur for the doctor's car and an old man who opened and closed the compound gate. The missionary doctor insisted that every person employed by the hospital, from the medical and nursing staff down to the chauffeur and gateman, must be a serious, active Christian, able to witness for Christ whenever opportunity might offer. The influence of this hospital was tremendous. Only eternity will tell the whole story. But what might not be accomplished by the Christian colleges of America and the world if their teaching and administrative staffs were composed entirely of people whose great aim in life is to seek the Kingdom of God and His righteousness? What might not be accomplished if every teacher, of whatever department or subject, were convinced that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge? And what establishment and stability in the faith might not be produced in the students if every teacher could be depended upon to give any student faithful, sympathetic counsel based upon the Christian view of life?

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# THE REPROBATION ISSUE (2)

Rein Leestma

This is the second and concluding installment of the address of Rev. Rein Leestma of the Christian Reformed Church of Lynwood, Ill. at the Sept. 29, 1977 annual meeting of the Reformed Fellowship. The matter with which it deals promises to be a major item on the agenda of the C.R. Synod in June. It is brought to the synod by a gravamen, a formal objection to the Churches' creed by Dr. Harry Boer.

## Our Creed Misrepresented

It is necessary now, however, to give attention to another objection which the gravamen raises. The gravamen states that by the doctrine of reprobation is to be understood "that credal confession of the Christian Reformed Church which teaches an unchangeable decree made in eternity by God which has the same irrevocable binding power as God's decree of election and which effects the declaration set forth in I/5 above." It must be at once made plain that this summarization of the gravamen does not reflect the approach, spirit, or even the words of the creed itself. This is "the straw man" of the gravamen; it is not what the creed says. The gravamen should have taken note of the conclusion attached by the Synod to the Canons. "Whence it clearly appears that some, whom such conduct by no means became, have violated all truth, equity, and charity, in wishing to persuade the public: that the doctrine of the Reformed Churches . . . makes God the author of sin, unjust, tyrannical, hypocritical; . . . that the same doctrine teaches that God, by a mere arbitrary act of his will, without the least respect or view to any sin, has predestinated the greatest part of the world to eternal damnation, and has created them for this very purpose; that in the same manner in which the election is the fountain and cause of faith and good works, reprobation is the cause of unbelief and impiety; that many children of the faithful are torn, guiltless, from their mothers' breasts and tyrannically plunged into hell; so that neither bap-

tism nor the prayers of the church at their baptism can at all profit them; and many other things of the same kind which the Reformed Churches not only do not acknowledge, but even detest with their whole soul."

The gravamen calls for "the express testimony of sacred Scripture" for what it says that the creed says. But what exactly does the creed say? It does not say what the gravamen says it says. Article I/15 says, "What peculiarly tends to illustrate and recommend to us the eternal and unmerited grace of election is the express testimony of sacred Scripture that not all, but some only, are elected, while others are passed by in the eternal decree; . . ." It becomes plain that the fundamental consideration of the article is both the eternal and the unmerited grace of election. The issue here is the sovereign choosing of the transcendent God who in His divine freedom chooses according to his own good pleasure certain specific individuals from out of the fallen human race unto redemption in Christ. This choosing is not conditioned by any historical factor, whether it be nobility, willingness, or fore-seen faith. This choosing is determined only by His good pleasure that the "excellency thereof may not be of men but of God." (Ephesians 1:3 ff). Here, in fact, is the crucial point which must be unqualifiedly answered. Does God elect, eternally, unchangeably, and unconditionally a certain fixed number of particular individuals unto salvation —, in distinction from others who are not so chosen?

If we are going to drift in the direction of a Barthian understanding of election then we will have to drop Article 7 and 10 of the First Head of doctrine too. Article 7 declares: "Election is the unchangeable purpose of God, whereby, before the foundation of the world, He has, out of mere grace, according to the sovereign good pleasure of His own will, chosen from the whole human race, which had fallen through their own fault from their primitive state of rectitude into sin and destruction, a certain number of persons to redemption in Christ . . ." Article 10 states: "He was pleased out of the common mass of sinners to adopt some certain persons as peculiar people to himself . . ." Lord's Day 7 of the Heidelberg will then also have to be dropped which says, "Are all men then, saved by Christ as they

perished through Adam?" No; but only those who by a true faith are ingrafted into Him and receive all His benefits."

The question before us is exactly this: Did God so choose some certain specific individuals out of the fallen human race unto redemption in Christ so that there are also certain specific individuals whom He did not so choose? The cause for the choosing of these some is found in God and the fault for the not choosing of the others is found in themselves not in God. The choosing and the not choosing are, however, in the plan and decree of the sovereign God who works all things after the counsel of His will.

### **Destructive Results of Approving the Gravamen**

If we are not sure of this, then we have only two alternatives. Either quit talking about election and lose the only assurance of salvation that there is, or else re-define election into something other than what the creed says. If we opt for the latter then there are many alternatives open to us. Not the least of these today is a Barthian reconstruction in which all men are elect in Christ even as Christ is the great reprobate for all men. If we go in this direction then the election which is in Christ is there on the shelf for all men if they but choose to take it. This is an Arminian construction which is contrary to the Word of God and robs God of both His freedom and His honor. We can also drift into a universalism in which all men, being elect in Christ, will yet somehow finally be saved. In this case it becomes quite unnecessary to go to church anymore and to preach and hear the gospel and believe. The line here is that all men are saved but they don't know it. If this is the drift of our denominational thinking then we are in trouble not only with Articles I/6 and I/15 but with the whole Canon — indeed with the whole Bible. I have the distinct feeling that this is indeed the case. It is not surprising then that the "Smile, God loves you" bumper sticker seems to have such wide appeal.

### **The "Express Testimony of Sacred Scripture"**

Now it must be clearly seen that the "express testimony of sacred Scripture" of which the creed speaks and which the gravamen is demanding are not the same. The gravamen demands express testimony of sacred Scripture for what it says the creed says. But what the creed says is not what the gravamen says it says. The creed speaks of the "express testimony of sacred Scripture that not all, but some only, are elected..." This is what the creed says because this is what the Bible says. Some only are elected. This is the express testimony of sacred Scripture and if this has to be argued then we are really in trouble. All the texts set forth in the Canon as well as in the gravamen attest to this fact.

If this is not the case, then there are two alternatives open to us. Either that none are elect, in which

case the present discussion would be impossible and useless, or that all are elect in which case the present discussion would be ridiculous and irrelevant.

The issue here is first of all the particularity of grace and the assurance of election. God is only free when he can so choose some and not others. The cause for the choosing is found in God and the fault for the not choosing is found in sinful man, but both of these are according to the decree of God who worketh all things after the counsel of His will. Now it is indeed true that here there are some things that are "past finding out" for us. In the face of the sovereign God we can do one of two things. Either bow in humble acknowledgment of His greatness or else reduce Him to the size where He will fit into our intellectual vest pocket. If we do the latter we may be recognized by our modern theological world but we will not be known of God.

When the creed is understood according to what it really says, not what the gravamen thinks it says, then the scriptures cited by the creed are precisely to the point. If a position is taken in which God wants to save all in terms of a universal election but is frustrated by the stubbornness of the sinner, then there must of necessity be a tortured and unprincipled explanation of the texts of Scripture. If the texts are to be explained in the way that the gravamen explains them then the result will be universal election, universal atonement, resistable grace, salvation determined by the will of man, and the continuous possibility of the eternal loss of the saints. This is not what the creed says because this is not what the Bible says. It becomes plain that what is at stake in this gravamen is not only the truth of Articles I/6 and I/15, but the whole of the truth expressed in the Canons. What is really involved here is the sovereignty of God and His glory and at once also the assurance of our salvation and our peace in Christ Jesus.

### **Presumption and Prejudice**

It must be noted that there is in the gravamen under consideration a certain kind of presumption, if not indeed arrogance, over against the church and her creeds. The gravamen sets up its own criteria for the establishment of a credal statement, then mis-reads the creed, then goes on to castigate the creed and the church for holding to teachings that are "grievously unbiblical, therefore unreformed, indeed unchristian doctrine." All this in judgement upon all those who by any standard of Christian love must be recognized as students of the Word of God in obedience to Christ. Fathers and brethren of the church all the way from Calvin to the present are chided, to put it mildly, for contriving irresponsible and nonchalant formulations of Biblical truth. The gravamen contains within it a quotation from Berkhof's Reformed Dogmatics in which he states: "The doctrine of reprobation follows naturally from the logic of the situation. The decree of election inevitably implies the decree of reprobation. If the all-wise God, possessed of infinite knowledge, has eter-

nally purposed to save some, then he, ipso facto, also purposed not to save others. If he has chosen or elected some, then he has by that very fact rejected others." Then the gravamen goes on to say, "Some text references follow which are not quoted, let alone exegeted. With such a theology specific biblical textual foundations are irrelevant." Now it is quite possible that one may not exactly like the way Berkhof states the matter under discussion and it is quite possible that a better formulation of the doctrine could be made but this kind of cavalier dismissal of the matter reveals, it seems to me, the prejudice, not only of Berkhof and Calvin, and all the others, but also of the Synod of Dort and the Canons, indeed of the Scripture itself, a prejudice of which the whole gravamen is profoundly guilty. The quotation from Calvin cited by the gravamen itself, is indeed very much to the point. "There is good

reason to dread a presumption which can only plunge us headlong into ruin."

The conclusion can well use the words of the Canons themselves. "Finally, this Synod exhorts all their brethren in the gospel of Christ to conduct themselves piously and religiously in handling this doctrine, both in the universities and churches; to direct it, as well in discourse as in writing, to the glory of the Divine name, to holiness of life, and to the consolation of afflicted souls; to regulate, by the Scripture, according to the analogy of faith, not only their sentiments, but also their language, and to abstain from all those phrases which exceed the limits necessary to be observed in ascertaining the genuine sense of the Holy Scriptures, and may furnish insolent sophists with a just pretext for violently assailing, or even vilifying, the doctrine of the Reformed Churches." ●

## What Others Say

# Reprobation and Boer's Gravamen

Dr. Harry Boer submitted to the 1977 CRC Synod a gravamen in which at the outset he states: "I submit herewith for synodical *examination* and *adjudication* a gravamen against the Reformed doctrine of reprobation as taught notably in the Canons of Dort, Chapter I, Article 6 and Chapter I, Article 15 . . ." In the closing sentence of his gravamen, Dr. Boer adds: "I submit herewith for Synodical *examination* and *adjudication* this gravamen . . . against what I judge to be a grievously unbiblical, therefore unReformed, indeed unChristian doctrine." This matter will be on the Agenda of the forthcoming 1980 CRC Synod.

**Response** — Over against Dr. Boer's denial of the historic doctrine of *Reprobation* a number of quotations may be adduced from outstanding Bible scholars. Cited in this issue is the following excerpt from a book, *The Sovereignty of God* (pp. 129, 130), by Arthur W. Pink:

"In closing this chapter we propose to quote from the writing of some of the standard theologians since the days of the Reformation, not that we would buttress our own statements by an appeal to human authority, however venerable or ancient, but in order to show that what we have advanced in these pages is no novelty of the twentieth century, no heresy of the 'latter days' hut, instead, a doctrine which has been definitely formulated and commonly

taught by many of the most pious and scholarly students of Holy Writ.

"'Predestination we call the decree of God, by which He has determined in Himself, what He would have to become of every individual of mankind. For they are not all created with a similar destiny: but eternal life is foreordained for some, and eternal damnation for others. Every man, therefore, being created for one or the other of these ends, we say, he is predestined either to life or to death — from John Calvin's "Institutes" (1536 A.D.) Book III, Chapter XXI entitled, "Eternal Election, or God's Predestination of Some to Salvation and of others to Destruction.'"

"We [Pink] ask our readers to mark well the above language. A perusal of it should show that what the present writer has advanced in this chapter is *not* 'HyperCalvinism' but *real* Calvinism, pure and simple. Our purpose in making this remark is to show that those who, not acquainted with Calvin's writings, in their *ignorance* condemn as ultra-Calvinism that which is simply a reiteration of what Calvin himself taught — a reiteration because that prince of theologians as well as his humble debtor have both found this doctrine in the Word of God itself."

J.V.P.

(To be continued)



## JESUS, THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE

John Blankespoor

**Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this? John 11:25, 26.**

Everybody needs comfort and security! And we need it today, as well as tomorrow. We need it always. Martha and Mary, however, didn't have much of it at this present time, even though they did have some peace of mind and heart regarding the resurrection of their brother in the future. But right now they had very little peace.

Every one acquainted with the Bible knows the story so well. These two sisters and their brother Lazarus were special friends of our Lord. He stayed at their home many times. Here He likely could relax after a busy schedule. A deep relationship of friendship had been established. But now Lazarus becomes sick. And though he may have been better one day than another, his over-all condition is worsening. Soon he is critically ill. And the Master is far away in Perea, some 40-50 miles east. Of course, they couldn't give the Lord a telephone call urging Him to come immediately, nor drive out there to get Him. A messenger, likely a "runner," is sent out, with haste, urging Christ to come at once. But Jesus has no haste. He tarries, to the confusion of the disciples. How Martha and Mary must have been looking and waiting for Him! But He just didn't come. And Lazarus died.

Martha and Mary have problems. Big problems. As all Christians do when they lack faith.

The two sisters have several problems. First of all, there was that problem of the "if." If only Jesus had been there, when Lazarus was so sick. The *if* implies that they had no peace or comfort at that time, and they don't have it now. If has to do with the hypothetical, the conditional, that which is uncertain. But the two sisters have more problems. Jesus the Master, means something to them and would have meant a lot to them, only when He is physically near. A Savior who is absent from them physically really means little or nothing to them. He would

have meant so much to them if He had been there and helped them physically by healing their seriously ill brother.

There are so many people like that. They look for Jesus, pray to Him when they need Him for some physical help. Otherwise they can get along quite well without Him. They treat God the same way. Someone once said, "He's like a handy man around the house." We like to have Him near when we need Him. Such people use the Lord, and that almost exclusively for themselves. And they call that religion! And they consider themselves to be religious.

Martha and Mary are like that here, even though they no doubt were Christians. But aren't we all like that so often, and altogether too much?

But the two sisters have still another problem. Their faith in Christ means something and will take on added meaning in *the future*. Martha believes that Lazarus will rise from the grave some day, in that final day. She doesn't doubt that at all. But that will be in the future. She has nothing *now*, in and for the present. Jesus, the Master, means nothing to her now, right now, it's too late. Her dear brother is gone. He's simply dead.

What does Jesus do? Immediately go to the grave and raise Lazarus? By no means. He will teach them something first, preach to them, and the miracle will confirm the Word. After all, this was always the purpose of the miracles.

Martha and Mary, the Jews, you and I, must know what Jesus means when He says, I AM the resurrection and the life. Not I will be, some day in the future, no, no; NOW I am the living One. Christ speaks and acts already on the basis of what He is as the Son of God and what He will do and be as the risen One from the grave. These two women must also know that He is such a Savior, whether He is present with them physically or not. He is and will be the ever present spiritual Lord, to help them physically and spiritually. They must know that He gives comfort and promises it not only for the future, in that last day, but now, right now. Now Martha, I AM the resurrection and the life. He is the resurrection because He is the life, the eternal Son of God Himself. All this should take on much more meaning for us, who live after and know about His cross, resurrection and the outpouring of the Spirit, and have the complete written Word of God.

Having given this sorrowing, weak-Christian Martha this assuring word, the Lord goes on to apply this wonderful truth to her in her present needs and to all of us.

First of all He shows that He is aware of the Christian's sorrows and needs at the time of death, and He is also aware the Christian's deep concerns and fears about the grave, and about rising from the grave. With that in mind the Lord speaks those immortal words, "He who believes in me will live, even though he dies." These words refer to that future time when the body will die. But he who believes need not worry. He will live again. Christ here reaches out to that great and final day of His return when all the dead will be raised. Surely the Lord knows how much we are afraid of the grave, of returning to dust. But be assured, He means to say, you won't stay there, your body won't. You SHALL live again, be assured of that. On what basis can He say this and give that kind of assurance? Because He IS the resurrection and the life. Today He is the risen, exalted Savior and Lord in heaven. He is alive, as the risen Son of God. He won't leave our bodies in the grave. Martha, He means to say, I won't forget you. I won't forget my people, my sheep. Never! They all shall live.

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That will take place someday in the future. But how about the present? After all Martha needs comfort right now, and so do we all, especially when we are in sorrow and special need.

This Jesus knows only too well. And being aware of it and desirous to comfort these His people there in Bethany He further adds: "And whoever lives and believes in me will never die."

With these words Jesus refers to *the present*. He is speaking about those who believe and are alive. Those who have the new life, with new hearts. Paul calls them a new creation. Those people never die, not really. Not with their new hearts, their new inner life. Through Jesus who is the resurrection and the life those people constantly receive the Spirit and life that is in Him. They have that whether Jesus is in Perea or not. They have that whether they live in America, or China, or wherever it may be, or in whatever circumstances they find themselves. They have that when they are healthy, but also when on deathbeds. This spiritual living Lord is always with them. Even the death of the body does not affect this relationship. They simply never die. They possess that new everlasting life. C. S. Lewis said once, "Christians never say goodbye." This Martha and all of us, must know. Jesus, as the Son of God, is much too small in the minds and hearts of Martha and Mary.

And isn't this true so often of us all?

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Notice how Jesus adds to this powerful brief sermon a definite qualification. It is not for everybody. No, only for believers. But even then it must not be

something that is objective. It must always be a soul-searching matter, one that brings us to self-examination. Therefore Jesus asks: Do you believe this? He wants these women and all of us to believe His words, constantly to believe and to trust in Him. And those who do so may be assured that He who can say, I am the resurrection and the life, is their Savior and Lord. And His promises are for them. He will be the resurrection and the life when they die, when their bodies are in the grave, but also for their souls and hearts, for all time, from the very present moment even unto eternity. Never is there or will there be a time when they don't belong to Him.

That's the answer to all the fear, problems, and anxieties of the two dear friends in Bethany. And for everyone who believes.

Then Jesus goes to the grave to raise Lazarus. These people, and we with them, must know that Jesus knows what He's talking about. Also that He can "back up" His words. Also when He says, just a few days later, "Let not your hearts be troubled. Peace I give unto you, peace I leave with you."

This is true for all believers, for all time and in all circumstances, barring none. ●

#### COMPASSION

*He came with the mob to the garden  
Equipped with a sword and a spear;  
And Peter, in love for the Master  
Did hastily cut off his ear.  
But Christ, with a heart of compassion  
And love for a lost one in sin  
Replaced the torn ear of the servant —  
Restored even this one again.*

*He hung on the cross with the Savior,  
A thief and a bad man was he;  
His life had been wasted and sinful,  
And now he faced eternity.  
The suffering, blessed Redeemer  
Had pity on him even there;  
"Today when I enter my Kingdom  
You too will be entering there."*

*They beat Him and mocked Him and  
railed Him,  
They hailed Him as King of the Jews;  
They planted a thorn-crown upon Him  
And falsely condemned and accused.  
The Christ, as He hung upon Calvary  
There dying that others might live;  
With a heart full of greatest compassion  
Prayed, "Even these, Father, forgive."*

Annetta Jansen  
Dorr, MI 49323

# THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST

Jerome M. Julien

## Christ's Atoning Death

Graciously, by means of atonement, God has changed the situation between Himself and His own. As Jesus Christ obeyed God even unto death, the cause of our estrangement was removed and we know our Covenant God's love and favor.

But the question is: Just exactly what took place as Jesus suffered and died on the cross? A variety of answers have been given to this question.

1. One of the more well-known answers is often called the **Moral Influence Theory** of the atonement. This view was first explained in a distinctive way by Abelard (d. 1142). He taught that God did not really need His justice satisfied. Therefore, Christ's death was not an offering brought to pay for sin. Rather, it simply spoke of God's love and was designed to soften hard hearts and lead them to repentance. Christ's death was accomplished to assure sinners that nothing will prevent God from pardoning sins. Loraine Boettner wrote:

The atonement is then conceived of as directed not toward God, with the purpose of maintaining His justice, but toward man, with the purpose of persuading him to right action. Christ's work on the cross is then made to be an impressive proclamation to the world that God is willing to forgive sin on the sole condition that men turn from it. His suffering and death is explained as merely that of a martyr in the cause of righteousness (*Studies in Theology*, p. 339).

To be sure, we are very uncomfortable with *this* answer. After all, missing is the idea that sin is guilt and worthy of punishment. In place of the Biblical teaching of total depravity is the essential goodness of man so that if only he sees how good and loving God is he will change.

2. Another answer is called the **Example Theory**. This answer was given by the Socinians who disagreed with the substitutionary atonement as taught by the Reformers. In many ways it is similar to the Moral Influence Theory but it adds that Christ, through His death, revealed the way of obedience. He is the example of obedience and His task was to inspire men to follow His example. Oh, to be sure, this answer includes the idea of payment: as a reward for Christ's obedience unto death He could give eternal life to believers. However, it is in reality man's obedience to the way of the Example, and not Christ's obedience that saves.

3. A third answer to the question of what Christ really did in the atonement is given in what is called the **Governmental Theory**. Hugo Grotius, famous for this answer, denied that God's justice *had* to be satisfied by Christ bearing punishment. Since God is Sovereign He can change His will. Exercising His

mercy He can forgive sin and cancel the debt without payment. Why, then, the atonement? Rather than strictly execute the sentence against sinners, God would substitute Christ's death to show how highly He views the law. The atonement would show God's displeasure over sin and His determination to punish it, for He cannot show indifference toward sin. Hence, the atonement was *an exhibition of justice*. The atonement was designed purely to teach God's hatred for sin.

But is God's will arbitrary? Is God only a God who threatens? Surely, this answer does not satisfy, either.

4. Still another answer is offered. This is called the **Mystical Theory** of the atonement. Again, Boettner wrote:

Redemption is regarded as having been accomplished not by anything that Christ taught or did, but by the incarnation in which Deity was infused into or united with humanity (*Studies in Theology*, p. 346).

The idea behind this answer is that in the incarnation Christ assumed the fallen human nature but kept it from sinning. In fact, He purified it. As men are saved they become partakers of this purified humanity. Others believe that the depravity of sin was gradually overcome during Christ's earthly life until at His death human nature was restored to its original glory. In this answer, Christ's suffering and death are not essential to His redemptive work. Salvation comes not by the substitutional sacrifice of Christ *for us*, but rather by His work *in us*, that is, by the incarnation of the man Jesus Christ in the church.

While in all these views of kernel of truth may be found, none of them really reflect the Biblical teaching. It is true that God's love plays an important, but often forgotten part in the atonement (John 3:16; Romans 5:8; I John 4:9, 10). But there is more — much more. It is true that Christ is represented as an example in Scripture (John 13:15). But He is never given as an example to the unbelieving as a pattern for their lives so that they will know salvation. It is true that God will not allow sin to go unpunished. However, the purpose of the atonement is not to make us aware that God rules, but rather, to satisfy God's justice. It is true that believers are united with Christ and partakers of a new nature. But this union does not come through the incarnation but by the Holy Spirit applying the results of Jesus' death.

## What, then, is the significance of Christ's death?

1. It is a *propitiatory sacrifice* (Romans 3:25; Hebrews 2:17; I John 2:2; 4:10; the same Greek work

is used for "mercy seat" in Hebrews 9:5). A propitiation is an offering by which wrath is turned away. Unfortunately, the *Revised Standard Version* has used the word "expiation." Now, to the casual reader to say this might seem like engaging in a quarrel over words. Even a quick trip to a dictionary will seem to say that we should not be bothered over these two words. However, there is a difference — a very important difference. According to *The Oxford English Dictionary* (considered by many scholars as the last word in word usage) "to expiate" means "to extinguish the guilt of, to pay the penalty of, to make reparation for, to extinguish by suffering to the full." In other words, "expiation" is the act of covering unto cancellation of a sin or crime. On the other hand, "to propitiate" means "to appease, conciliate (one offended)." "To appease" is "to pacify anger." To translate the word in these passages "expiation" is thus to say that Jesus' death was an offering to cancel sin. Now, while that, indeed, was the result, that is *not all* that took place. To merely cover guilt by cancellation would not appease God's wrath. It would simply put the offender at peace. "Propitiation" is God-ward. God is holy and full of burning opposition to our sin (Leviticus 10:6; Psalm 2:12; 94:1). His wrath must be appeased (Exodus 23:7; Romans 2:1-11). Therefore, Christ's death had to be a propitiatory sacrifice.

2. It is a *substitutionary, or vicarious sacrifice*. The word "vicarious" simply means the taking of another's place. Thus, Jesus Christ is our Vicar. He took our place; He died vicariously. In explaining this term Charles Hodge wrote:

By vicarious suffering or punishment is not meant merely sufferings endured for the benefit of others. The sufferings of martyrs, patriots, and philanthropists, although endured for the good of the Church, the country, or of mankind, are not vicarious. That word... includes the idea of substitution. Vicarious suffering is suffering endured by one person in the stead of another, *i.e.*, in his place. It necessarily supposes the exemption of the party in whose place the suffering is endured. ... Christ's sufferings were vicarious in the sense in which the death of one man is vicarious who dies in the place of another to save him from a deserved penalty...

(*Systematic Theology*, II: p. 475f).

When we say that Christ was our Substitute we mean that He took to Himself the obligation to satisfy God's justice which belonged to us. "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us..." (Galatians 3:13; see also, Romans 5:6-8; I Corinthians 1:30; II Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 9:28; I Peter 2:24; 3:18; etc.). How beautiful!

It was not simply the penalty of sin that Jesus bore. He bore our *sins*. He was not made sinful, but He was made sin and, therefore, brought into closest identification with our sins that it was possible for Him to come without thereby becoming Himself sinful. Any exposition of ours can only touch the fringe of this mystery (J. Murray, *The Atonement*, p. 30).

3. Further, Christ's death is *particular*. By this we mean "not universal." Traditionally, Reformed people have spoken of a "limited atonement." What do we mean?

Christ's death is *limited* in the number of people for whom it has effect. Christ died for those whom God gave Him (John 6:35-40; 10:11-18). Therefore, we can speak of Christ's death as particular. He died for specific people. Now, of course, when we speak of Christ's death here we are supposing the Biblical teaching that Jesus died to really save, not just to make salvation a possibility. And if Jesus died to save completely, then He could only have died as the Substitute for the elect. Else, some would have their sins paid for twice: once by Christ and then a second time by them eternally in hell.

However, Christ's death is *unlimited* in its results. For the Arminian Christ's death has results *if* men will believe. They must complete Christ's work. But Christ's work is not limited by men. He died unto a complete salvation (Matthew 1:21).

In other words, the atonement was not made for all men. Nevertheless, for those for whom it was made there is complete salvation.

As soon as we say that Christ did not die for all men we are speaking heresy, according to some. Are we? Let's see what Scripture says. We read "... for it is he that shall save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21); "... the Son of man came ... to give his life a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:28); "... for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many unto remission of sins" (Matthew 26:28); "... Christ also, having been once offered to bear the sins of many..." (Hebrews 9:18; see also Isaiah 53:12; John 10:11; Ephesians 5:25-27; Romans 8:32-34; Revelation 5:9).

It is true, of course, that there are some so-called universalistic texts which are used to "prove" that Christ died for all men. For instance, we read that Jesus is the Savior of the "world" (John 1:9, 29; 3:16, 17; 4:42; I Corinthians 5:19; I John 2:1; 2; 4:14, among others). Also, there are verses referring to "all" men (Romans 5:18, 19; II Corinthians 5:14, 15; I Timothy 2:4-6; Hebrews 2:9, among others). When, however, we see each text in its context we can see that no universalism is meant. Besides, "all" is not always "all." In many texts good sense will not allow that word to be used absolutely (Genesis 6:13; Mark 1:5; I Corinthians 6:12). In their helpful *The Five Points of Calvinism, Defined, Defended, Documented* (p. 46) Steele and Thomas answer those who emphasize the so-called universalistic texts:

One reason for the use of these expressions was to correct the false notion that salvation was for the Jews alone. Such phrases as "the world," "all nations," and "every creature" were used by the New Testament writers to emphatically correct this mistake. These expressions are intended to show that Christ died for all men without *distinction* (*i.e.*, He died for Jews and Greeks alike) but they are not intended to indicate that Christ died for all men without *exception* (*i.e.*, He did not die for the purpose of saving each and every lost sinner).

Since Jesus came to die and thus satisfy God's righteousness, and since He came to die particularly, that is, in place of those whom God had chosen unto Himself we who know this saving work can testify

Bearing shame and scoffing rude,  
In my place condemned He stood;  
Sealed my pardon with His blood:  
Hallelujah what a Savior!

## I EXPECT THE RESURRECTION

Peter De Jong

"He has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (I Peter 1:3, NIV).

### A Musical Confession

The B Minor Mass of Johann Sebastian Bach has been acclaimed the greatest work of possibly the world's greatest musician. Although he called his work a "mass" and used the words preserved through the centuries in the liturgy of the Roman Church, Bach, a Protestant, an earnest, orthodox Lutheran, was not giving any support to Roman misinterpretations of the Lord's Supper, but making a remarkable confession of gospel faith. His music reverberates with the grand affirmations of the gospel. Nowhere do they come to more thrilling expression when he deals with the Lord's resurrection in relation to that of His people. A large part of this work, no less than eight movements, is an exposition of the Nicene Creed (one of our church creeds which we might profitably use much more than we usually do). As the music seeks faithfully to reflect the gospel events which we confess, it becomes slow and somber when it recalls Christ "crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate, He suffered and was buried." Then, in the sharpest possible contrast, Easter day dawns with "Et resurrexit," "He arose the third day according to the Scriptures," a vivacious and exhilarating chorus in which the choir is virtually turned into an orchestra in a way that must be heard in order to be thought possible. And this excited confession of the Lord's resurrection is echoed a little later when, in a musical arrangement that unmistakably imitates that confession, the Christian affirms with the same lively enthusiasm, "And I expect the resurrection of the dead, And the life of the world to come, Amen!" The great Christian composer at this point succeeded in conveying in a manner that defies description the biblical message of the resurrection of our Lord.

### The Bible's Revelation

The Easter story in the gospels began in the gloom of a funeral. The Lord's followers needed to learn the fact of His resurrection, and, what was equally important, the Bible's explanation of the meaning of it. Notice the remarkable way in which the Lord Himself twice in the 24th chapter of Luke stressed that point. Even before the two men who talked with him were permitted to recognize Him, their neglect of the Scriptures had to be corrected. "O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken!" "And beginning from Moses and from all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself" (vss. 25,27). A little later in the account the same point was stressed again. To show them that he was really present, he "ate before them. And he said unto them, These are my words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which are written in the law of Moses, and the prophets, and the psalms concerning me. Then opened he their mind, that they might understand the scriptures; and he said unto them, Thus it is written, that Christ should suffer, and rise again from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name unto all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. Ye are the witnesses of these things" (vss. 43-48).

### A Restored Vision

The church of the Middle Ages had largely lost the clear understanding of the gospel and therefore too the confident personal assurance and hope men ought to have from knowing the Risen Lord. I have often noticed the lack of such assurance expressed, for example, in the somber music of the Roman Catholic requiems or funeral masses. One notices anxious prayers for the dead and appeals to be delivered from the threatening judgment, but no jubilant assurance like that of the Apostle: "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." Faulty Roman doctrines of salvation partly by works, of purgatory and of the impossibility of personal assurance except by special revelations, robbed the medieval church member of such assurance. Men had lost this because they had, like the Lord's disciples, become "foolish men . . . slow of heart to believe" all of the Bible.

The biblical understanding of and confidence in the gospel, restored in the Reformation as men were led back to the Scriptures, animated Bach and his glorious music. He confessed and taught us to confess that the Lord, "arose according to the Scriptures" and therefore we too are to expect with the same confident enthusiasm, "the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come." We constantly need to relearn that lesson as the Apostle Paul (in Eph. 1:15-23) prayed that the church might do. When in our time church leaders replace faith in the Bible as God's Word with scholarly criticism of it, the clear faith and confident assurance of the gospel disappears from the life of the church and it



begins to slide back into the confusion and gloom of the Dark Ages. We need to recover the Bible's clear teaching and confident confession as the Reformers taught it and as Bach also so impressively taught us to sing it. When the Lord takes from us, sometimes suddenly, believing relatives or friends, as a reminder of the transiency also of our own lives, we are not to be in sorrow as though we had no hope (I Thess. 4:13). We are called to share the faith and confession that as the Lord "arose the third day according to the scriptures" we too "expect the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come."

## CRC Or CCC?

Edwin H. Palmer

### Becoming Congregational?

CRC or CCC? Christian Reformed Church or Christian Congregational Church? Presbyterianism or independentism? Unity or diversity? Do we all agree on certain teachings and abide by certain rules, or does each one go his own way? One minister preaches this, but another preaches that? CRC or CCC? What do you think? You judge.

#### 1. Lodge Membership

*Item:* The Richfield Christian Reformed Church (Clifton, N.J.) wrestled with the admission of lodge members. After a long study and lengthy report, the Synods of 1970 and 1977 repeated the historic position of the Christian Reformed Church by stating firmly and decisively that membership in the church of Jesus Christ is incompatible with membership in the lodge. They contradict each other. Richfield protested and asked classis to overture synod that they may "be entrusted with the essential responsibility of determining whether such persons [lodge members] become members of that congregation."

Classis Hackensack at first approved the overture, but on more mature reflection, rescinded its action. Richfield then bypassed classis and appealed directly to synod. Synod again (1979) emphatically reaffirmed the inherent incompatibility of lodge and church membership. But Richfield went ahead anyway. Contrary to the advice of the church visitors in November, it accepted five lodge members as members of the church a few weeks later. When the January 1980 Classis was told of the situation by the church visitors, Classis turned down every motion to do something about it and thereby gave its silent consent. Fortunately, some consistories with courage are considering protesting.

#### CRC or CCC?

#### 2. Women's Ordination

*Item:* The Synod of 1978 decided that women may be ordained as deacons. The churches and classes rose up in arms as never before and deluged synod with objections. In the light of this turmoil, the following synod (1979) appointed a new study committee

and asked all consistories "to defer implementation of the 1978 decision, until the study committee has rendered its report to synod, and the churches have had opportunity to consider its recommendations."

But at least one church went ahead anyway and ordained women deacons!

#### CRC or CCC?

#### 3. Biblical Inerrancy.

*Item:* Synod has repeatedly (1959, 1961) defended the historic Christian position that the Bible is completely trustworthy and has no errors in it. One retired missionary published a scathing attack against the inerrancy of the Bible (*Above the Battle?*). He confused many people because he said that the Bible was infallible but he poured a whole new idea into that word. Infallible means without error. But not for this missionary, who thinks the Bible is infallible with errors!! He confesses two contradictory ideas: 1. the infallibility of the Bible and 2. the erroneousness of the Bible ("the Bible is not inerrant in the accepted sense of the word," p. 82; let us "not fear to speak the offense of the literal fallibility of the Bible," p. 88).

With that as partial background material, the Synod of 1979 again firmly reasserted the inerrancy of the Bible. It did not buy this division between infallibility and inerrancy. Rather, it "reiterated the position taken by synods in previous years as listed below: a. The decision of 1959 that 'Scripture in its whole extent and in all parts is the infallible and inerrant Word of God' . . . b. The decision of 1959 'that it is inconsonant with the creeds to declare or suggest that there is an area of Scripture in which it is allowable to posit the possibilities of actual historical inaccuracies (cf. Belgic Confession, 'believing without any doubt all things contained therein')."

As can be plainly seen, the Synod of 1979 did not make a cleavage between infallibility and inerrancy, saying that the Bible was infallible but errant. Rather it said that "Scripture in its whole extent and in all parts is the infallible and inerrant Word of God."

With that clear pronouncement in mind, this former missionary still goes about preaching: "I see no evidence in the Bible for the teaching of the inerrancy of Scripture. On the contrary, I see evidence in many places against it."

#### CRC or CCC?

#### 4. Sunday Worship.

*Item:* Church Order of the Christian Reformed Church, Article 51: "The congregation shall assemble for worship at least twice on the Lord's Day to hear God's Word, to receive the sacraments, to engage in praise and prayer, and to present gifts of gratitude." At least twice on Sunday. They may meet more, but not less.

Yet there are churches that have only one worship service.

Hence the title of this article: *CRC Or CCC? What do you think?*

*Dr. Palmer of Wayne, New Jersey, is Executive Secretary of the New International Version of the Bible.*

# SPOTLIGHTING THE ISSUES

## II. GOD'S INVIOLEABLE WORD

Peter De Jong

The March OUTLOOK contained the first of a series of articles, suggested by the Reformed Fellowship's Board, which would call attention to basic issues which trouble our churches. Because we are to do this by presenting side-by-side (1) the historic, Biblical, Reformed view and (2) the emerging, changing, broadening view held by an increasing number in our churches, it seemed appropriate first to show the need for presenting our problems as a confrontation between two opposite, irreconcilable views. Therefore we considered "I. The Nature of the Problem: The Biblical Antithesis."

Proceeding now to consider particular issues that trouble us, we see more and more clearly that the one that underlies many, perhaps all of the rest is the issue of (2) The Authority: God's Inviolable

Word. The changes and confusion of our times compel us to face the basic questions of what we must believe and what we must do and why we must believe and do them. That is the question of authority. We are driven back to God's Word as the authority for Christian faith and life. (See Luke 6:46-49 for example, where the Lord says that that only what is based on His Word will endure.)

Appeals to that authority, however, do not seem to be settling our controversies, for the Bible is cited by those on both sides of every issue. Why does appeal to the Bible not help us? Does it give us no clear direction? The answer to those questions is that we are faced by especially two different ways of regarding and using the Bible (what is often called the problem of interpretation, or "hermeneutics"). Consider, in broad outline, the two views:

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### II The Authority: God's Inviolable Word.

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#### (1) THE BIBLICAL, REFORMED VIEW

The Bible is God's Word. Although it was spoken and written, to and through men it is still the direct revelation of God and it must always be received and obeyed as that (1 Thess. 2:13). It is inspired by God not merely in its main teachings but even in its words. This is the claim made regarding it throughout the Bible, but especially by the Lord Himself. (See, for example, Matt. 5:17-19; John 10:35; Luke 24:25-27, 44-47; 1 Cor. 2:11-13; 2 Peter 1:16-21; 2 Tim. 3:13-17).

God's covenant of grace with His people is not only a personal revelation and relationship, but it is defined and insured, just as important human relationships are, by the inviolable terms of a written document or "contract" (Gal. 3:13-17; compare the terms "Book of the Covenant", "Old and New Testament," etc.) This Word of God may have to be interpreted and applied, and may confront us with questions which we cannot answer, but it sternly warns us that if we "critically" alter, add to or take away from it we violate its terms and are condemned by it (Deut. 4:2; Rev. 22:18, 19). When the Bible claims such inviolable authority as

#### (2) THE BROADENING VIEW

The Bible, although God's Word, (or a "form" or "record" of it), is also the word of men, for it was mediated through men like ourselves. It is therefore subject to all of the limitations of human weakness and imperfection and of the changes and cultural conditioning of man's history. It contains diverse and conflicting theologies. Its authority must not be taken as applying to all of its details, but only to its "content and purpose as saving revelation of God in Christ."

We must understand its "authority" not by naively appealing to what some biblical writers said, but by critically studying it in the light of modern knowledge to determine what kind of book it really is. Its "inspiration," "infallibility" or "inerrancy" (if one wants to keep those terms) must be understood as "functional," not as meaning that it is without mistakes, but that it will surely do what the Lord intended it to do. Therefore we may take Genesis, not as an actual account of our (evolutionary) origins, but as symbolic of important principles. Perhaps Moses did not write the first books, Jonah was not literal history, Isaiah had more than one

God's Word we may not approve or tolerate any weaker or lesser view of it. We must regard it as "inspired" by God, therefore "infallible" and "inerrant," "believing without any doubt all things contained in" it (Belgic Confession V).

We may not be diverted from this clear claim of the Bible by allegations that the Holy Spirit is now leading scholars or the church to other, better ways. We are warned to "Believe not every spirit, but prove the spirits whether they be of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1). Any spirit who leads men to contradict the Bible is not the Holy Spirit, but the devil and we must resist him with "the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God" (Eph. 6:17).

author, Daniel was not written till long after Daniel's time and Jesus was not virgin born and Jesus did not say or do what the gospels record. Even Jesus' remarks about such matters settle nothing, for (1) he accommodated himself to his times, (2) he didn't know everything, (3) and we do not know with any certainty anything which he actually said or did. In matters of faith and life we must use the Bible with discretion, distinguishing in the light of current, scholarship, present circumstances and our own experience, what in it is still relevant and what is no longer applicable in our time. Our faith is not to rest on the Bible as record of past revelation and of the churches' experience, but on the present and continuing work of the Holy Spirit who guarantees that the church and its faith will endure. ●

## What Others Say

# Is Capital Punishment Obligatory in the Case of Murder?

A CRC synodically-appointed committee consisting of Doctors Henry Stob, Hessel Bouma III, Stephen Monsma, Clarence Vos, and Louis Vos have presented a report on Capital punishment (*Acts of Synod 1979*, pages 468-508) which report has been referred to the churches for study, reflection and response to the study committee by October 15, 1980 . . ." The committee is to report further to the Synod of 1981. The report before the churches recommends that the CRC Synod declare:

"a. That the Scriptures *lay no mandate* on modern states to exercise capital punishment.

"b. that the Scriptures *do permit* modern states to inflict capital punishment.

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

**Response** — Over against this denial of the historic position of Reformed Christendom a number of quotations may be adduced from outstanding Bible scholars. Cited in this issue is the position on capital punishment of the well-known theologian Charles Hodge who said:

"Such punishment in the case of murder, is not only lawful, but also obligatory.

"Because it is expressly declared in the Bible, 'Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God made he man.' That this is of perpetual obligation is clear, because it was given to Noah, the second head of the human race . . . Moreover the reason assigned for the law is a permanent reason. Man was created in the image of God; and, therefore, whoso sheds his blood, by man shall his blood be shed. This reason has as much force at one time or place as another . . .

"There are clear recognitions in the New Testament of the continued obligation of the divine law that murder should be punished with death. In Romans 13:4 the Apostle says that the magistrate 'beareth not the sword in vain.' The sword was worn as the symbol of the power of capital punishment. The same Apostle said (Acts 25:11): 'If I be an offender, or have committed anything worthy of death, I refuse not to die:' which clearly implies that, in his judgment, there were offenses, for which the appropriate penalty is death" (Systematic Theology, Volume III, pp. 363, 364).

J.V.P.

(To be continued)

# FAMILY PLANNING

Laurie Vanden Heuvel

## Image-Bearing

When white light is passed through a transparent prism, the light is refracted into the many colors of the rainbow. It is an impressive demonstration of the beauty of God's *design* in creation.

Similarly when the Light of the world, Jesus Christ, shines through the life of a spiritually dead man, the *image of God* revives and becomes refracted in many different ways.

As we saw last month, the concept of image can have a variety of interpretations.

## Carving

An image can be a carving. God wants His image-bearers to be a carving. In Deuteronomy 6, Moses instructs Israel: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart... soul... and strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. *Carve* them on your children." How? "Talk about them when you sit at home and when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates." It is not uncommon today to hear parents as well as children complain that they get *too much* of God and His Word — church, Sunday School, catechism and Christian School. But the truth is that we can never get too much of God and His Word. His truth must be engraved upon us so that it *shapes* all of our thoughts, words and action. The family altar must be strengthened in fact, revived in our homes today. Only by daily fellowship with God can the image of God be once again restored in our lives.

## Copy

Image-bearing also means that we are to be a *copy* of our God. We are to *imitate* Him. "Imitation" is not a very popular concept today. Imitation stymies creativity we are told. But Ephesians 5:1 says: "Be ye therefore *imitators* (copies) of God as dear children." What is there about God that we and our children must imitate?

- His *spirituality* in this body-oriented society.
- His *knowledge* in this society of distorted views of God, of man and of created reality.
- His *wisdom* in this warped society of twisted value judgments.
- His *truth* — absolute integrity in all of life.
- His *goodness* — the absence of evil and the demonstration of unselfish love.

## Reflection

Image-bearers are also to be *reflectors* of our God. Not only are they to *contain* the attributes of God, but as a mirror throws back a reflection, so the believer is to throw back or actively *demonstrate* those attributes in daily living. The light of Jesus Christ which shines through the believer must be refracted in day by day living. Acts 4:13 tells us that people marvelled at Peter and John and "took knowledge of them that *they had been with Jesus*." Can it be said of us that we have been with Jesus? Do our lives *reflect* His deep, abiding presence within our hearts?

## Thought

An image can also be a "thought," a "mental image." We are told to "think God's thoughts after Him" as image-bearers. Why is this important? It is important because "As a man *thinks* in his heart so is he." The relationship between thought and action is very close. Consequently, the shaper of our thoughts is very crucial in image-bearing. Unfortunately, the most powerful shaper of thoughts in today's world is the television set and the results are there to see. Spiritual apathy and material success are the dominant motifs in today's world. Consciences are becoming insensitive to adultery and violence. What we desperately need as image-bearers is a housecleaning of our thoughts. Romans 12:2 says, "Be not conformed to this world; but be ye *transformed* by the *renewing of your mind*, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God" that you may be image-bearers of God.

## Impression

An image can also be an impression. Every country has an image — high or low. Every community has an image — neat or unkempt. God has an image too and that is you and I and our children bound in covenant to Himself. We are God's advertisements to the world. Paul says, "You are our epistle (letter) written in our hearts to be known and read by all men... written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart." Someone has said, "The Christian is the only Bible some people will ever read." What a responsibility we have! As image-bearers we, together with our children, are to witness, to make an impression on a godless world.

Image-bearing is the primary activity of the Christian. Training for image-bearing is the primary task of every parent. But the world is too big and created reality too vast for the Christian parent to conquer alone. So Christian schools have been erected by Christian parents. Christian teachers have been hired who will view these children as covenant image-bearers and unlock for them the "treasurers of wisdom and knowledge." Join us next month when we explore the task of the Christian School in building image-bearers for God. ●

Note: The address of Mrs. Vanden Heuvel, editor of this department, is 207 Kansas Ave., N.W., Orange City, Iowa 51041.

# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

## ON THE VOS LEGACY

It was good that the Outlook carried the article by Peter De Jong on Geerhardus Vos and J.G. Vos.

Some scholars feel that G. Vos was the greatest Reformed theologian the western hemisphere has produced. They consider that the mantle of Calvin fell on his shoulders. And J.G. is not only a penetrating and lucid scholar in his own right, but has been to his father as Luke was to Paul. One might have to go back to Calvin and Olevianus to find so fruitful a teacher-disciple team.

At times both G. Vos and J.G. Vos were badly treated, sometimes by those who should have revered them. The sincere appreciation for them shown in the excellent Outlook article is justified and all believers can be grateful for it.

Howard Long  
Anchorage, Alaska

## "CONGREGATIONAL PARTICIPATION" A Popular Trend

"Congregational participation in worship" — if you are not a stranger in Jerusalem you will have heard this phrase quite often lately, and you will know that it happens to be one of the "in" things today in the CRC, especially in Canada. Just recently a colleague of mine wrote:

When you visit the various churches you get the impression that worship is a very solemn occasion. Again in general there is not much spontaneity in the worship services. Someone said to me: "The Sunday service is all too often a spectator's game instead of an active worshipping of our God." ... Many members of our churches have become a bit restless; tired of the formalistic worship and the traditional way in which we do things.

This is only one voice among many, particularly among the leaders, calling for more "participation" in the worship service.

## Wholesome Change

Before making a few comments regarding this, let me say first of all that I am not opposed to some liturgical changes, provided they are edifying to the congregation and conducive to better worship. A certain flexibility, openness and freedom in the worship service is desirable, as long as the proclamation of the Word remains central. The form of worship will differ somewhat from congregation to congregation, and all changes are not wrong; nor are they all beneficial. If the principles of worship set forth in Lord's Days 35 and 38 of the Heidelberg Catechism (cf. Acts 2:42) are adhered to, then one need not worry too much about "liturgical renewal," provided it is genuine *renewal*.

## Reservations About This Trend

Having said that, let me state a few reservations I have regarding the call for more "congregational participation."

1. From what I've seen and heard, there are some strange liturgical calisthenics taking place in some of our churches, which either deny or seriously jeopardize the above-mentioned principles of worship. Corresponding with an over-emphasis on "liturgy" is a de-emphasis on preaching.

2. I have the distinct impression that most of the demand for "participation" comes from the leaders (clergy) rather than the members of the congregation. The same is true of the desire for a variety of liturgical innovations.

3. I know from experience that the majority of the members of our churches still want to hear a good sermon above anything else, and when that is present, liturgy becomes secondary. Whereas if the first is missing, no amount of toying with the latter is going to remedy the situation.

4. The second service is in serious decline in many of our churches. Liturgical experimentation has done nothing to improve it.

5. Most basic of all, what is "congregational participation"? Is the congregation not participating in listening to the sermon, praying along in intercessory prayer, giving offerings, and most of all in responding to God in congregational singing? Is this all a "spectator's game"? If things are the way they should be, if there is rapport between the minister and his people, is there *really* such a thing as a "one-man show"? Or are these just slogans repeated by unthinking people who don't really know what worship is all about?

6. Does not congregational response come to its best and fullest expression in congregational singing? Is that not what John Calvin taught us? Can Scripture reading or prayer or singsong leading by a few members of the congregation (whereby at least 90% of the congregation is still excluded) ever measure up to communal, congregational singing? Again, just what is "congregational participation"? Is it something we have never had before? Or could it be a phrase coined by some who have a radically different conception of what worship ought to be?

7. Let's keep in mind the admonition of a leader in the Methodist church given some years ago: "Certainly one could draw upon

many illustrations to show that when spiritual life and righteousness disintegrate, ritualism is apt to receive more attention. And let the Methodist Church seek more earnestly to follow Jesus Christ, whose only requirement of worship was that it be 'in spirit and truth.'"

J. Tuininga  
Lethbridge, Alberta

## THE NEW METHODOLOGY

*Synod 1979* took an important step in the wrong direction. This synod tolerated a strange formula of the interpreting of the infallibility of H.S. The name of this strange formula is: "The New Methodology."

*The New Methodology* (New Theology) by Prof. Van Elderen and Verhey.

Prof. Van Elderen in his speech in defence of Verhey's errors at Synod said that he also tried to come to a New Methodology the same as Verhey did. He explains that this new method means, that we must interpret each Gospel and Bible book in its own setting, in its own "sitz-im-leben," after its own special purpose, and time.

Some fruits of this new methodology we find in what Van Elderen wrote in *Calvin Theol. Journal*, 1976, page 71. Volume III, No. 1

There Van Elderen said: "The first chapters of Genesis were written centuries (in fact millennia) after the events described there in. And further that the age of man on earth is hundreds of thousands of years, maybe millions."

According to this New Methodology of Van Elderen the purpose of these first chapters of Genesis is not to give historical facts. Their purpose is to defend the God of Israel against the heathen idolatry of the gods of Canaan. This is called a polemical approach.

As said, thus the purpose of these chapters is not to give exact historical facts, but no more than polemically reasoning to defend Israel's God against heathen mythology. Therefore we do not have to interpret these chapters literally, according to Van Elderen, because that is not their purpose. They are of a polemical order and do not have to be seen as historical facts first of all. Especially not in case they are contradicted by facts of science regarding e.g. the great age of the human race, and the speaking serpent.

But if then these narratives about the creation of Adam and Eve and about the Fall of men are not literally true, then they are *myths*.

## Biblical myths.

And mind you here comes the totally irrational reasoning of Van Elderen and the New Methodology, they want to use this Biblical *myths* to defend Israel's God against the Canaanite idols with their *heathen myths*.

According to Van Elderen: these first chapters have been written by an unknown, an anonymous author, many thousands of years after the events, which they try to describe. Maybe in the time of the Judges or Kings. Shortly before the exile, says Dr. Kuitert. Genesis has thus nothing to do with Moses.

Fortunately, there is a better view of Genesis than that of Van Elderen, professor at Calvin Seminary. That is the view of Dr. D.J. Wiseman, Professor of Assyriology at the University of London, England, author of many books in this field. He defends the view of his father, P.J. Wiseman.

That view is that Genesis consists of the toledots, the accounts of the Patriarchs of old, written down on clay tablets and signed off with their own names: Adam, Noah, Shem, Isaac and Jacob.

These Patriarchs were the first prophets of their time.

Moses assembled these toledots in one book. And *that is the book Genesis*. And the Lord Jesus testified about their literal truthfulness in Matthew when He said: "Did you not read that?" Also many quotations in the New Testament.

(more information about these toledots on request).

Concerning the errors of Dr. Verhey, who doubts the reality of the earthquake in Matthew 28 and that the serpent spoke to Eve.

The leaders of the synod stressed very much the declaration made by Verhey that the Bible is the fully reliable and authoritative Word of God. But the synod tolerated doubts about the literal exegesis of the earthquake and the serpent, leaving the possibilities of a new methodology as advocated by Van Elderen and Verhey.

But to this New Methodology there is no end. One can further doubt if there were real angels in the grave or their real message. And what not? One can doubt every thing under the disguise of this new methodology.

The toleration of this New Methodology as synod did in the Verhey case (and the Van Elderen case) opens the door to a total liberty of interpretation (leervrijheid) as in the Geref. Kerken.

This is *the most dangerous resolution* a synod of the Christian Reformed Church ever took.

And the worst thing is, they try to cover it with the formula that the Bible is the fully reliable and authoritative Word of God.

Here one comes on the slanting slope which leads to the New theology of Dr. Kuitert who doubts the reality of the ascension and the second coming. And there at the end looms the doubt about the resurrection of the dead.

P.H. Vander Werff  
London, Ont.

## A LOOK AT BOOKS

**WHY CHRISTIAN MARRIAGES ARE BREAKING UP** by Gerald L. Dahl. 144 pages. Hardcover. Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville and New York. \$6.95.

Not only outside of the church, but now also on the part of those who profess to be Christian, today's epidemic of marital strife and divorce is taking its fearful toll. Increasingly, demands are being made upon pastors and elders to try to prevent the breakup of marriages and homes in their parishes. Gerald L. Dahl, a practicing clinical social worker with the Minneapolis Clinic of Psychiatry and Neurology and an evangelical, writes on the background of his own Christian faith and a lot of experience with cases of marital discord. His down-to-earth and easy-to-read book with its wholesome counsel may be read with profit by those whose marriages are being threatened as well as by those who are expected to serve such with practical, Christian counsel. "The time has come," says the author, "for the church to aggressively return to its God-given role of disciplining the marriages of its members." By and large his counsel makes good sense.

**TO BE NEAR UNTO GOD** by Abraham Kuyper. 679 pages. Paperback. Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Mich. \$8.95.

For a bygone generation it would have been like carrying coals to Newcastle to commend the reading of this classic by the then well-known Dr. Abraham Kuyper. Favorable acceptance in Reformed circles of anything written by this renowned Dutch author was then a foregone conclusion. But time bears all its sons away and even their greatest achievements are so soon forgotten. Be that as it may, Baker Book House has done well in recently reprinting this English translation of Kuyper's 110 meditations arising out of the words of Psalm 73: "As for me, it is good to be near unto God." This book is one of the select few from among so many that has survived the test of time.

**GOD'S MAN** (a novel on the life of John Calvin) by Duncan Norton-Taylor. 298 pages, 1979. Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Mich. \$8.95.

Although admittedly fictional in part, Norton-Taylor's novel on the life of Calvin correctly epitomizes his life and genius in its title designating him as "God's Man." Not surprising on the part of one who has served on the boards of editors of both *Time*, Inc. and *Fortune* and for six years as *Fortune's* managing editor, Dr. Norton-Taylor depicts John Calvin's life and labors with a literary verve that captures the reader all the way. To be sure, the book is "a novel" but, at the same time one that may whet the appetite for a renewed interest in Calvin's Calvinism which, as an exposition of the Reformed faith, still remains second to none.

**THE INTERNATIONAL STANDARD BIBLE ENCYCLOPEDIA**. Illustrated in Four Volumes. Volume One: A-D. 1006 pages, 1979. William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Mich. \$29.95. Reviewed by John Vander Ploeg.

A minister's library, or that of any other serious Bible teacher, without this old standby, *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, is just about unthinkable. As soon as he can afford it, the seminarian avails himself of this set (familiarly known as ISBE) because he knows that he cannot afford to be without it. The original edition dates back to 1915 and until now there has been no revision of it since 1929. Eerdmans is to be congratulated on now coming out with a fully revised edition in four volumes, the first of which is now available.

Whereas the original edition in 1915 claimed for itself "a reasonable conservatism," it is gratifying to be told in the *Preface* of this new edition that "while the high level of biblical scholarship has been retained, some of the unnecessarily mediating views of the first contributors have been eliminated, so that the new edition is, we believe, at once more scholarly and more conservative than its predecessor." Further use of this "fully revised" ISBE should reveal in how far this intention has been achieved.

General Editor Geoffrey W. Bromiley and two of the three Associate Editors (Everett F. Harrison [Emeritus Professor] and William Sanford Lasor) are from Fuller Theological Seminary. It is of interest also to note that among the new contributors are the following from the CRC: Clifford G. Christians, Willis P. De Boer, David H. Engelhard, David E. Holwerda, Raymond Opperwall, John H. Stek, Bastiaan Van Elderen, Allen D. Verhey. Other new contributors familiar to our readers are the late John Murray and N. H. Ridderbos. As to the wisdom of the choice of some of the CRC contributors, we will have to bide our time to see what will be forthcoming.

ISBE's coverage of every name and place found in Scripture as well as all the terms and topics of theological and ethical interest almost makes this set a library all by itself. Used with discretion, this publication provides a storehouse of Scriptural facts and information for which every Bible student is constantly in pursuit. No less

than twenty-six sharp maps and also a liberal use of illustrations enhance the value of this encyclopedia. It is to be hoped that Eerdmans may find it possible to carry out and complete their plan to release the remaining volumes at yearly intervals.

**HELP FOR HOTLINERS**, by Robert B. Somerville, D.Min. (Westminster Theological Seminary) 266 pages, Price \$6.95, Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1978. Reviewed by Leonard Greenway.

This is a manual for Christian Telephone Crisis Counselors. It is Biblical in its approach and will serve well for a variety of counseling situations encountered in a community telephone ministry. Recommended.

**THE PIETY OF JOHN CALVIN**, An Anthology Illustrative of the spirituality of the Reformer. Translated and Edited by Ford Lewis Battles with Music edited by Stanley Tagg. Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1979, 180 pp. with supplement \$9.95. Reviewed by Leonard Greenway.

We have here a well-compiled anthology that helps us appreciate Calvin the man and Christian believer. In a sense it opens the heart of Calvin to us, and what we see enables us to feel the warmth of his piety. This book, handsomely put together, also contains six psalms versified by Calvin. Highly recommended.

**THE CONSUMMATION OF HISTORY** — A Study of the Book of Revelation by George G. Weeber, Baker Book House. \$8.95. Reviewed by Katie J. Gunnink.

Rev. Weeber's book is an excellent addition to the literature on the book of Revelation. His interpretation takes serious account of the symbolic elements and apocalyptic character of the book. The author never lets you forget the main theme of the book of Revelation which is the consummation of history under the Messianic rule of Jesus Christ in this dispensation. Also, he reminds his readers of the purpose of the book which is to comfort, give courage and hope to the witnessing, New Testament church.

Of special help are the summary outline, synopsis of each chapter, definition of terms, and careful treatment of Old Testament references referred to in the book of Revelation. In addition to sound, Biblical exegesis, Rev. Weeber has written a book that is readable for anyone willing to make a study of Revelation. Highly recommended!

**A WOMAN'S WORKSHOP ON PROVERBS** by Diana Bloem. Zondervan Publishing Co. \$1.75. Reviewed by Katie J. Gunnink.

An excellent study guide with leader's manual, and student's manual. The topical treatment gives this study special interest for Bible discussion groups. Proverbs is a practical book and such practical subjects as Joy, Wealth and Poverty, Justice and Government, Words, and Marriage are treated.

I know of Bible study groups which have used these manuals with great spiritual profit.

**THE CONTROL OF HUMAN LIFE** by Philip E. Hughes. 1971. 55 pages, paperback. \$1.00. Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., Nutley, N.J. Reviewed by Dr. Renze O. De Groot.

(A paper; for the Christian Medical Society 1968 by visiting Professor of Biblical and Theological Studies — at Westminster Seminary, Philadelphia.)

Prof. Hughes challenges the hopes and dreams of many philosophers and scientists of our day, who optimistically predict a biological perfection of man through eugenic control of human life. Man is also theological. Man is God's creature; man bears God's image, Man is a personal being having mind and morality. He has been given sovereignty over God's creatures and personal responsibility to obey God. God created man male and female and created him with sexuality and responsibility for parenthood in that basic unit of human life and activity, the family. So this theory of genetic control of mankind merely on the biological level militates against every finer and higher aspect of man's being, making of him a mere animal.

In the Christian perspective Hughes maintains that the notion that man is the master of his own destiny, in an evolutionary manner, is alien to the blessed realization that God is Lord of our lives. He rules Christians to the end that they may fulfill the cultural mandate of earthly mastery, as well as seeking the kingdom of heaven. The Christian is the only true realist. He brings God into the picture, and therefore marches steadily upward in all His expectations. We realize that man by reason of sin is incapable of utopia, but not God, who saves us in Christ unto glory. The glory of "a new heaven and a new earth" at last we look for His coming in glory.

**HOW WE PROSPER UNDER FREEDOM** by W.T. Hackett. 1979. 95 pages, paperback. Published by Citizens Evaluation Institute, Washington D.C. \$2.25. Reviewed by Dr. Renze O. De Groot.

This book on "Good Economics for the United States" seeks to set forth the advantages of free enterprise in the nation's business and economic activities, as opposed to Marxism, or any other government interference. This little paperback is written with great clarity being intended as a classroom or a discussion course textbook. It seeks to demonstrate the enormous gain afforded us under our system of demand and supply. This works best when the profit motive is given free course to stimulate "the greatest good for the greatest number," which simply means our use of the natural resources by applied human energy and good tools of productivity.

But this economic freedom of employing a free market, in a willing exchange system according to competitive choice, can operate only where there is freedom from political control, says Economist W. T. Hackett. And this freedom, he says, was intended by the founders of our country, when they wrote our constitutional guarantees, guarantees resting squarely upon the moral fundamentals of the Ten Commandments which must be obeyed, if man is to live with man in a social order.

For a brief study of the basics of Economics under a system of free enterprise, this book is well worth a thoughtful perusal.

**THE DUTCH REFORMED CHURCH IN THE AMERICAN COLONIES** by Gerald F. De Jong. 279 pages. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Mich. \$6.95. Reviewed by John Vander Ploeg.

"Know Thyself" expresses a need that is basic, perennial, and universal. To know one's own history is indispensable for arriving at a full knowledge of ourselves. In his spectacular bestseller *ROOTS*, Alex Haley has jolted not only blacks but all America as well by portraying the horrors his race has endured in a bygone day. To know the past is essential if as individuals, as a race, as a nation, and also as a church we are to know ourselves.

Wisely, the Reformed Church in America at the observance of her 350th anniversary, has been concerned not only about her future but also to promote a greater knowledge of her history as a denomination. With this in mind, the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America inaugurated a series of seven volumes designated as "The Historical Series of the Reformed Church in America". Dr. Gerald F. De Jong, professor at the University of South Dakota, has written this volume on *The Dutch Reformed Church in the American Colonies*.

In the *Preface*, Dr. De Jong writes: "Three hundred fifty years ago, in 1628, a small gathering of people met in a mill loft in the little wilderness village of New Amsterdam and organized the first Reformed (Dutch) congregation in North America. Little did they dream that their small community would someday become the metropolis that New York is today. Nor could they have imagined that three and one-half centuries later, from this small band of worshippers would develop the Reformed Church in America with its more than nine hundred congregations".

The period covered in De Jong's book begins in 1628, the year of the founding of the RCA, up to 1772 "because", as the author states, "it was in that year that it received ecclesiastical independence from the Mother church in Holland . . ."

Of special interest as the story unfolds are such items as the relations of the young church in America to the mother church which easily became complicated because the two were an ocean apart, an early concern for an educated ministry, recurring problems concerning the ministers' salaries, relations with the Indians and the blacks, and the Americanization process in general.

A couple of items that may provide a chuckle for youngsters and also be somewhat reminiscent for oldsters may be cited:

"The consistory of the New York Collegiate Church on January 29, 1747, recommended that the ministers limit themselves to not more than one hour 'so as to remove the complaints about the long sermon . . . The dominies expressed agreement with the proposal, but it was not well observed . . . The story is told

that when James Schureman, one of Reverend William Jackson's parishioners, held up his watch as a hint that the sermon was lasting too long, the dominie, eyeing him keenly, declared: 'Schureman, Schureman, put up your watch; Paul preached till midnight'" (p. 131).

About house visitation, De Jong tells us: "Because the minister was a man of considerable importance in the community, these visits were looked forward to with anticipation but also with some trembling. The following quoted from Mellick, *Story of an Old Form* describes very well the family preparations that went into a visit from the dominie:

"At such times, great preparations were made for receiving the man of God, who was looked upon with peculiar awe and veneration. The good-man of the house put on his Sunday clothes, the good-wife spread her most attractive board; the children's brown feet were encased in shoes, and, dressed in their best, with their faces polished, they waited with great fear and trepidation".

It is of interest to learn that the term "Dutch" was retained in the church's title until 1867 when the name "Reformed Church in America" came into use. De Jong's book is an outstanding portrayal of the trials and triumphs of the RCA in those early times and also a witness to what the Lord has done throughout the years.

**PEOPLE'S TEMPLE — PEOPLE'S TOMB** by Phil Kearns with Doug Wead. 288 pages. Paperback. Logos International, Plainfield, New Jersey. \$2.25. Reviewed by John Vander Ploeg.

It was as long ago as November 18, 1978 that the world was stunned by the report of the gruesome and sickening suicide of over 900 Americans, followers of Jim Jones

in Jonestown, Guyana. As the grim account unfolded in following days we were horrified and were left groping for an explanation of how this could possibly be. It may very well be that, after this lapse of time, we would rather put this tragedy behind us and no longer torture our minds in searching further for a solution.

However, with good reason it makes better sense not to dismiss this bizarre and nightmarish Jonestown thing from our minds too readily. On a flyleaf of their book, the authors, Kearns and Wead, tell us why we ought not to do so. They say:

"Under the People's Temple pavilion in Guyana there is a fitting epitaph for the victims of Jim Jones's brand of religion. It says simply, 'Those who do not remember the past are condemned to repeat it'. This book was written with that thought in mind — so that the world would remember Jonestown and, through greater understanding, never permit a repetition of its atrocities".

The reading of this book is recommended. Why? *Lest we forget, lest we forget!* Jonestown is by no means to be thought of as the end of the cults. Instead, they are becoming an ever increasing threat to ourselves and to our offspring. Archenemy of Christianity, Satan knows how to fight fire with fire, the true religion with the false.

Phil Kearns, a Portland, Oregon businessman, became a member of the Jones cult as a teen-ager. Later he made his escape when his eyes were opened to the unbelievable devilry that Jim Jones was carrying on. His mother and also a sister were among those who perished at Jonestown. Doug Wead, the co-author, has written eleven books. A recent best seller on Northern Ireland, *Tonight They'll Kill a Catholic*, has appeared in twelve languages. About the proliferation of religious cults today, these men tell us:

"While legal minds began trying to ascertain the consequence of cult investigations, America was confronted head-on with figures that said up to 10 percent of Americans may be involved in fringe cults whose doctrines involve everything from Satan worship to UFO idolatry. Up to 5,000 new cults may have been organized in the last decade, and scholars estimate the number of adherents at between twenty and twenty-six million ... The most susceptible age group for cults at the present time is the 18-24 range".

The New York Times News Service has recently issued at least two full-length articles about Jonestown today. I have no way of knowing how many local newspapers besides *The Grand Rapids Press* carried these news stories. According to a *G. R. Press* article dated October 15, 1979, "The United States is asking \$4.3 million for having recovered the bodies, flown them to the United States, identified them and prepared them for burial". According to the same article: "There is a great desire among many Guyanese to suppress the memory of what happened here".

To be sure, it is anything but pleasant to contemplate all the gory scenes depicted in this book by pictures and in writing. But of this we may be sure, Jim Jones will not be the last ruthless egomaniac to mesmerize others, to prey upon, and, even drive them berserk, all in the name of religion. The threat to ourselves and to our children in all this is definitely not to be ignored.

