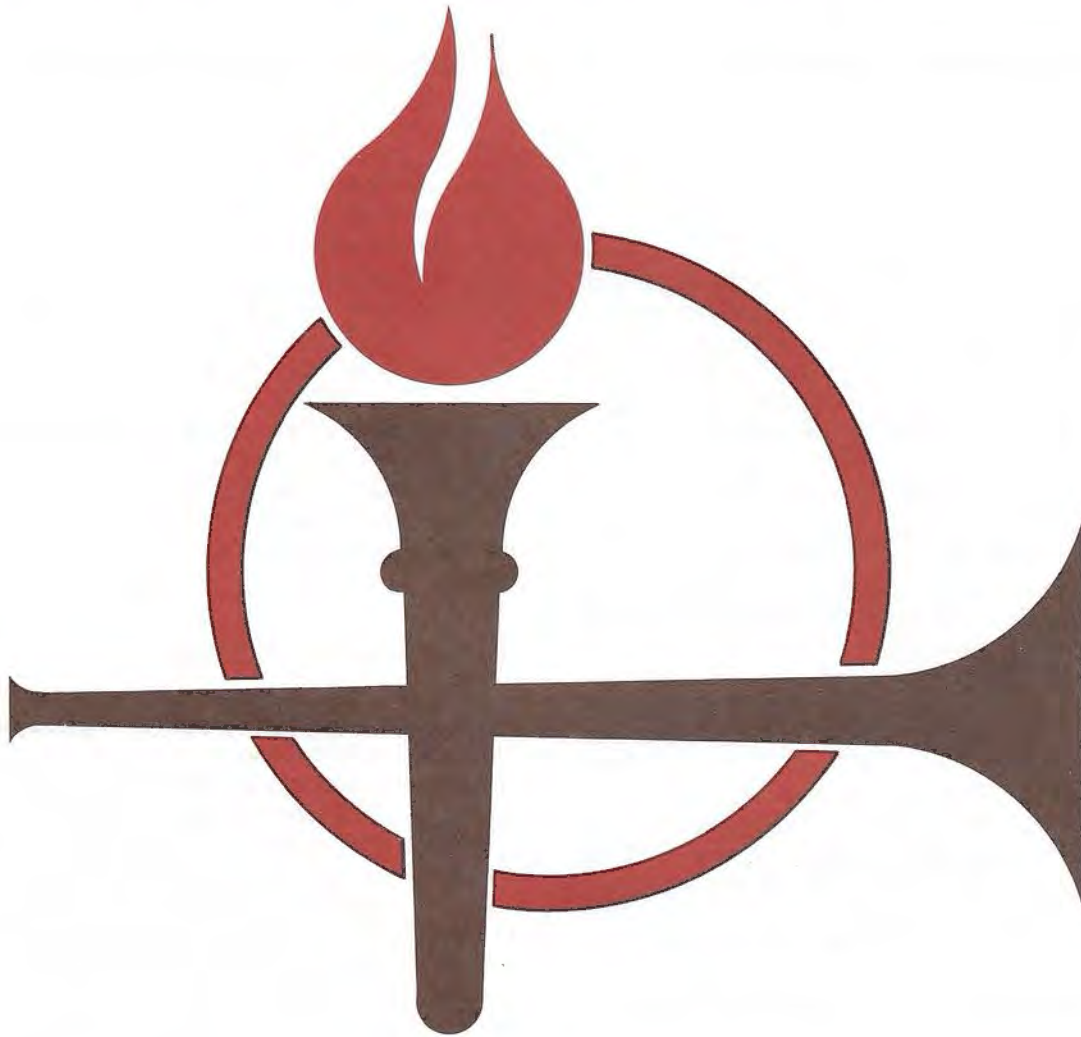


THE OUTLOOK

DEVOTED TO THE EXPOSITION AND DEFENSE OF THE REFORMED FAITH

JUNE 1982



**UNDER AUTHORITY
CATECHISM WITHOUT LEARNING
CRC SYNOD AGENDA**

An Open Letter

to all who are members of the Christian Reformed Church

As members of the Christian Reformed Church we, the undersigned, wish to express our sincere concerns about what we see as *wrong trends in teachings and practices among us*. We list some of our concerns below with the hope that a greater awareness of wrong trends will encourage us to reverse our course and to seek again that first love we had for Christ and His Body, the Church.

1. The Proclamation of the Gospel.

We see a definite shift away from sound prophetic preaching. There is in evidence among our members, both young and old, an increase of wordly entertainment, drunkenness, and sexual immorality. It is becoming increasingly more difficult to keep our children from going to bars, shows or cabaret dances, and the like, when many parents allow their children to attend. Why is it that so *many among us no longer dare to call sin sin*, and that many of our ministers are seemingly afraid to let God's Word speak against such sins? Our people need to hear from the pulpit that such practices do not belong to those who seek to practice true holiness of life before God.

God's Word, via the sermon, ought to be central in every worship service. That is what the Reformers fought for and died for. It seems to us that sound preaching of the Gospel is not getting the attention it should. The Word of God should be fearlessly proclaimed and applied to every area of life for the guidance and correction of God's people. Our preachers ought to call us to repentance and holiness of life.

2. Discipline of Erring Members.

Where the Word is proclaimed, taught and maintained there follows the loving discipline of members not walking the Christian way of life. *Very little attention seems to be paid to discipline today in our churches.* Discipline, one of the keys of the King-

dom of Heaven, was given by Jesus Christ himself to the church to open or close the Kingdom.

Lack of discipline will result in the complete breakdown of Christ's body and the *corruption of sound Christ-like lifestyles*. We must come to grips with sin, take a firm stand against every form of it. Only in that way can we stem the fearful tide of materialism, secularism, sport madness and other idols of which our generation has taken a hold. Let us stir up one another in the fight against ungodliness.

3. The New Hermeneutics.

This is a *new way in which God's Word is explained* and analyzed by many theologians today, including seminary professors and ministers in the Christian Reformed Church. Some of these men for example, Dr. Verhey and seminarian Clayton Libolt, question the historicity of God's revelation in Genesis.

It is no surprise then, that several ministers within the Christian Reformed Church no longer trust Calvin Seminary and therefore plan to start a new seminary in Iowa. There is no doubt that we, if we want to remain a Reformed Church, must fearlessly take our stand on our creeds and dare to oppose those who go contrary to what we as Reformed people confess in our Bible-based standards.

When some of our leaders dare to question God's authority and His infallible Word they are imposing man's thinking and learning above the Truth. Then God becomes grieved and justly angry with the "whole congregation." We are at that stage in our churches now.

4. Church Instruction.

We must be much more alert as to what is being taught to our children in our church classes, as well

as to what is being proclaimed from our pulpits. Doctrinal indifference is a sure sign of a dying church. All catechism and Sunday School materials should be carefully studied by our instructors and parents, also materials from our own Publishing House. We must insist that our children be taught the doctrines of the church as contained in the Heidelberg Catechism and our other Creedal standards. We have a rich heritage to pass on. Let us not neglect it or water it down.

We should also insist that the memorizing of catechism questions and answers, as well as Bible passages, be retained. Discussion type classes in which catechumens only listen and share and are not required to study or memorize fail to indoctrinate the youth of the church adequately. We must not let our children down in this important formative function in their young lives.

5. Our Church Offices.

It is our strong conviction that the Scripture is very clear that the special offices in the church are to be held by men only. That we find among us a kind of determined drive to open the special offices to women stems from the influence of a women's liberation movement in the world today which is not driven by obedient listening to God's Word. God's Word is very clear on the Headship principle bestowed on men by God Himself, yet because of the New Hermeneutics these issues come up for re-interpretation and cause many children of God to falter in their faith.

6. Strong Committed Leadership.

We observe a tendency on the part of some ministers to go their own ways in preaching, teaching, liturgy, and the like. *Our ministers are accountable for their teachings and actions to our church councils.* Elders and deacons of those councils should dare to stand up for the Truth under whatever pressures they face. Certainly, elders should, as they are called to do, analyze the sermons of the ministers carefully and prayerfully. (See the forms for ordination and the church order.)

These are some of our concerns. We hope by means of this open letter to stir up members and leaders of our churches to *preserve* true Reformed preaching and teaching and to *return to the sound Biblical practice of life.* We believe that if this does not happen we will soon lose our great Christian Reformed heritage and no longer have a right to be called by that name. ●

C.C. van Boom
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Fred Lenten
Klaas Shenk
Rev. C. Tuininga
Wayne Tinga

THE OUTLOOK

(USPS 633-980)



"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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Under Authority

Norman F. Brown

Converted by Grace

This journey of faith with my Lord began in January, 1968. Shortly thereafter I began reading, as for the first time, the Gospels. I immediately felt great affection and affinity for the Roman Centurion immortalized in Matthew 8:5-13. You see, I was converted as a 20-year-old during my second class (junior) year at the U.S. Naval Academy at Annapolis, Maryland. The marvels of science and engineering had handily crippled whatever feeble faith I carried to college from my liberal church in Providence, Rhode Island. For safety's sake I had philosophically maintained a lightening rod of religious belief in God, quite agnostic ("God's a hard Guy to know!") but not quite atheistic ("God does not exist"). My real religion was a sort of All-American Civil Religion practiced in the macho militaristic fashion that Academy life made comfortable and convenient. How proud I'd felt as we marched to mandatory chapel and tourists watched in admiration and awe. But God in His Sovereign Grace, through the testimonies of several evangelical Christian "friends" had warmed my heart on that cold January night so much that the Holy Spirit created a passionate love for the Lord Jesus Christ. I was saved.

Christian in the Military

Shortly thereafter, this fellow, called simply "a centurion," did two things for me: he helped me settle the "Christian in the military" dilemma (another topic for discussion altogether) and he showed me the relation of saving faith and God's authority. I discovered I must become "A Man Under Authority!" The military life style proved exceptionally useful for training me in the principles and practices of true discipleship, though I'm much better at explaining the former than exhibiting the latter. (For this reason, for those physically, mentally, and principally able, I strongly urge Christians to experience a tour of military duty.)

Military Authority

It took another year, but I also learned there is a unique compatibility of Reformed theology with the

military model of authority and discipleship. It saddens me that so many Reformed Christians have strayed from our roots into either the chill of satanic fatalism, devoid of all love, or into the superficial warm glow of American fundamentalism. I pray this article can help restore a renewed appreciation of Calvinism as we are awed by what astonished our Lord. All the crowds of that day, and this, recognize Jesus' abilities. Only a Roman army officer seems to have seen His authority.

The nature of that authority is well illustrated by the military analogy. "For I am a man under authority, with soldiers under me; and I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes, and to another, 'Come,' and he comes, and to my slave, 'Do this,' and he does it" (Matt. 8:9, RSV). This man is an expert on authority! "I know how to obey and command, to exercise authority and to submit to it. These others may need visual and physical evidence, but not me!" This is the great benefit of military experience for Christians. Even this centurion's severely limited and uninformed faith sees what these well-catechized Jews couldn't. They demand extensive signs for proof, including the overthrow of this centurion's political superiors and the defeat of his military subordinates. He, on the other hand, begs only Christ's momentary attention. "Just a kind word of healing, Sir. Just say the word and I'm sure it will happen. That's how it is with me and my soldiers. I know the nature of authority, Jesus, and I see YOU are THE Authority!"

How sad it is that we reverse and confuse things today. With distrust of God's sovereign will we regress into fatalism and are afraid to ask of God. Or with aversion to offending lost listeners we plead with people to see and accept Gentle Jesus as Savior, and only afterwards point to the fine print of the covenant of grace — "by the way, He'd also like to be your Lord, if you'll let Him." But our friend centurion, understanding Reformed theology as we can only envy, submits to Jesus Christ as Lord FIRST. Now all things are possible, even his salvation, once he's discovered the extent of Jesus' authority.

Understanding Christ's Authority

With his military mentality he understands the scope of Christ's authority: "... but only say the

word, and my servant will be healed." No military commander's authority is total. As a naval officer aboard ship I could command my men even to die, as could this centurion. But neither of us could control men's minds nor regulate their health. This is what the centurion begins to understand. He does not impudently liken his authority to Christ's, but simply confesses to understand it by analogy, much as we understand the Fatherhood of our God by likening it to the human relationship. "I can command my men to their deaths yet I see somehow You have power OVER death." This is the insight that made Jesus marvel. I doubt Jesus is so much surprised as awed by God's working in a centurion, causing the proper response to Christ to which the Jews were blind.

A Humble Faith

The centurion's response to Christ is instructive: humility before Christ's authority and faith in Christ's ability. He engages in no false modesty, no self put-down. He comes to Christ humbly but not crawling. He confesses no sinfulness in morbid and morose terms as though he could earn Jesus' attention thereby. Confession is certainly good and proper, but it can *never* earn Christ's favor. True humility is, rather, an overall attitude of life before God. The amazing aspect of this centurion's attitude is that the conquering army officer puts the conquered rabbi first. "I don't deserve your attention," he says, through some Jewish elders (Luke tells us). This is the confession of a man who sees his Savior and is struck by the Divine Presence.

A Needed Lesson

Have we such humility? Do we approach our dear Lord sensing both our unworthiness in our unholiness as well as Christ's gracious consent to give us His undivided though undeserved attention? If so, in all humility we must give Christ our undivided and perfectly deserved attention. This should be a precious daily ritual, not with conceited self-compliments for our brief, halfhearted "devotions" (how we abuse the term!) but with great humility asking only His promised attention to all the details, great and small, of our lives, because He too is a man.

Then, in humility, there is faith in Christ's ability. We note with wonder ourselves the lack of "could's" and "would's" in the centurion's petition. His soldiers undoubtedly often doubted his abilities, but he has no doubts about Christ's ability. Now, to be sure, we overly press our point if we simplistically state the centurion here displays "saving faith." Jesus has yet to die, be resurrected, reveal the meaning of God's work in the Son and provide the rest of revelation. Yet Christ's wonder shows God's saving work has begun in this man. If he so marvelously entrusts his beloved servant-boy's life to this Jew, he surely will entrust his own.

It is sad if we miss the great lesson here while debating whether the man is "saved." We proudly entrust our souls to Christ Jesus for salvation. What other choice have we? But as true "do-it-yourself-

ers" we daily deny Christ's authority over life. We distrust Him to redeem our lives and in pride try to work things out ourselves. How pitiful we are in our pride! Ignoring or spurning His Lordship at the shop or office, within our marriages and families, we self-righteously hold onto the lordship of our own lives, thank you. Well, here is an "outsider" with an important lesson. By humbly confessing Christ's divine ability and submitting to His absolute authority he is about to reap the harvest of faith. Will we learn the lesson?

A Way of Life

There are promises in Christ's authority. For those who submit, the reward of believers — salvation. Not only the Bridge at the brink at the end of life's road, delivering us safely across the bottomless pit to the blissful eternity of heaven. Christ's Lordship promises deliverance of this life from deadly self-control with its totally untrustworthy lord to the glories of "heaven on earth" through His two great commandments, as His inexhaustible power supplies all the energy we need to fulfill them. Jesus Christ will deliver our lives from the mundane and boring and depressing sameness to the high adventure of committed discipleship, though surely not without its suffering and hardship.

If Jesus marvelled at the centurion's faith, the Jews were astonished by Jesus' statement. Wasn't he the hated oppressor? Weren't the Jews, Abraham's seed, inheritors of the faith? No, Jesus is telling them that faith is God's sovereignly bestowed gift. And God is about to give it to far more people than the Jews could imagine. There are great numbers of elect from every nation to be gathered into the Kingdom and share the great feast. That is the promise of the Lord to those who submit to His authority and confess His Lordship.

The Alternatives

For those who reject Him, the 'reward' is terribly different and frightening. They will be cast out into the darkness beyond God's blessed light, to spend eternity anguishing with their hateful selves in unfulfilled passions. I fear that in the Church today are many "Judaizers" who lay claim to salvation with a yawn as the Gospel is once again heard but are incredibly bored.

Wake up and see this centurion! This hated "outsider" is becoming an "insider" while insiders scoff and scorn and stand liable to banishment. We Reformed believers claim "Jesus is Lord" as our highest doctrine. Yet many seem to have lost all appreciation for its meaning and implications. I plead for revival, not of fear of hell, but of zeal for the Lordship of our Blessed Savior and Sovereign Lord Jesus. He is in charge, the ultimate Authority. Is He in charge of your life? ●

Rev. Norman F. Brown is the pastor of the Pine Creek Christian Reformed Church at Holland, Michigan.

The Glories of Salvation REVEALED BY THE SPIRIT

John Blankespoor

No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him — but God has revealed it to us by His Spirit.
I. Cor. 2:9, 10a

On Pentecost day there were no angels visibly present. Often we read of their presence in the life of Christ, in the appearance to Mary, in the fields of Ephratha, when He was tempted in the wilderness, then in Gethsemane and on the resurrection morning. More instances could be mentioned. But on Pentecost, we read nothing about any appearance of angels. It was the time of the harvest of the work of the Lord. Angels can do great things for us, reveal things to us, protect us and help us, but only the Spirit can work salvation *in* us.

The third Person of the Holy Trinity was poured out into the Church. The following example has been used to illustrate this great work of the Lord. Imagine an ever-flowing fountain of fresh water which eventually forms a stream and flows into a lake. And the lake never gets full. God is the Fountain, the infinite, eternal, inexhaustible Source of life with all its blessings. The Spirit as the fountain was given to Christ, and so through Christ this "stream" of the Spirit flows into the church. The church as the body of saved sinners, becomes the recipient of the indescribable riches of life and blessings that are in God. The source never runs dry and the lake never becomes full.

Pentecost time has also been called the time of harvest in the great work of salvation. What the pay-check is to the laboring man, business returns to the businessman, and the harvest to the farmer who has been sowing and planting, that Pentecost is for the church. On the very day of Pentecost the O.T.

Israelites had to bring to the temple the first fruits of the finished harvest. It is on this day that the Lord begins with His finished harvest. And He continues to gather it in throughout the entire New Testament (the last days) until the end of time. Then it will be complete.

This text speaks of two senses of man, of his eyes and ears. Perhaps we can say that they are the most common and important senses. With the eye man can see many wonderful things, as with the ear he can and does hear marvelous sounds, and music. Then there is the potential of the heart which can create and produce much in God's culture and handiwork. But here is something which the Lord has prepared which no eye has ever seen, and no ear has ever heard, nor has it ever arisen in the heart of any man. It is so great and marvelous that it surpasses all *possibility* of imagination. It is possible, for example, for man to see the North Pole, even though few people have ever seen it. But here the Scriptures speak of realities that man *cannot* of himself see or hear, or even begin to imagine in his heart. No human heart ever comes up with such marvelous and incredibly beautiful thoughts, and experiences.

The question is, what is Paul referring to when He speaks of such great and glorious works of God? Basically of course everything God does is good and beautiful. And it is equally true that the natural man does not, cannot understand or comprehend the works of God. The natural mind does not discern the things of the Spirit.

Here Paul has in mind first of all the work of Christ's cross, as the way of salvation. This is and was a way of such wisdom and love that had those who crucified Him known it, they wouldn't have done it. None understood but God alone. No human heart ever conceived of the cross as the basic solution to our problems. Which human philosophy has

ever concluded that there was need of such a cross? Whoever heard of such love and mercy as well as of such righteousness? In all other religions of the world man is saved by giving, sacrificing to the gods, he himself making payment and atonement. What tongue can tell the length and breadth, height and depth of the love of God shown on Calvary? Which pen can describe it? Who will ever give a complete description of it? This is the work of God and God alone. And by the Spirit of Pentecost we begin to know and enjoy it.

In a broader sense, this expression refers to all the works of God in the entire process of salvation. They far surpass all that man does, can do, or can even imagine to be possible. But by the Spirit it is shown and given unto us. I think of a few texts which stand out in my mind. The fear of the Lord is to be desired more than gold, even fine gold (Ps. 19). In other words, true fear of God gives such joy that it is to be desired much more than becoming a millionaire. That's what the Spirit does, and shows us. Paul speaks of the Spirit giving a peace that surpasses all understanding. What a blessing that is — a fruit of the Spirit. Natural eyes and ears don't see or hear of such things, nor do natural hearts experience such joys. Peter, in quoting Joel in Acts 2 speaks of the Spirit being poured out like a down-pour of rain. Imagine receiving such a down-pour of the Spirit. Paul also speaks of being filled with the Spirit. Spirit-filled people have a good bit of heaven in them, and are Christ-like. The Lord Jesus, in speaking about true believers, says that from within them shall flow rivers (not little trickles) of living waters. He said this referring to the outpouring of the Spirit. Such blessings and such spiritually elevated lives, natural ears and eyes or hearts do not comprehend or experience. They are the fruit and work of the Spirit of Pentecost. The manner and depth of God's love, how all things work together for good for His people, the riches and depths of His promises and faithfulness, are all so exalted and sublime that no eye has ever seen them, nor ear heard them, nor have they ever arisen in the heart of any man.

Finally, these words likely also refer to what lies ahead in the program of our Lord, the new heaven and new earth and eternal glory. We ask many questions about these which always remain unanswered. How can the millions of people in heaven all be with the Lord at the same time? What will the new heaven and earth be like? Will they be one? Will there be vegetation and animals on the new earth? What will we do all the time? We don't have the answers to these and many other questions. But we know that all of it will be so glorious that no eye has ever seen it, nor ear heard of it, nor has it ever arisen in the heart of man.

These gifts of the Spirit are prepared for all those who love Him, says the text. Naturally, they are only for God's people. We could say, for the elect, for those for whom Christ died, or, for all believers. But the text doesn't say it that way. Instead, for all those who love Him. We find the same in Rom. 8:28. "All things work together for good to them that love

God." Love is on the foreground in both instances. Of course, love is the fruit of the regenerating work of the Spirit and elective grace. But here we read of the conduct of Christians and their responsibility to walk in the fear of God. The Scriptures often confront us with the basic principle that when we fear Him He will bless us. That we have here; He will give these wonderful blessings of the Spirit to those who love Him. The simple truth therefore is that those who love Him most are also the ones who receive much of the Spirit. In other words, the more we have of Christ and His love, the more we reveal of Christ in us, the more we enjoy these great spiritual blessings not known to the world. And we have a sure hope for that great future of which pearly gates and golden streets are only symbolic descriptions. ●

JUNE IN WISCONSIN

*In the soft June morn
When life is born
Fresh dews like rainbows glisten,
With heads bowed down
While matins sound:
The world in reverence listens.*

*In the soft June days
There's a lazy haze
On distant hills and farmlands;
And enchantment there,
A mystery where
The sky joins with the uplands.*

*In the soft June rain
There's a heady pain
Of lilac scent and fragrant,
On growing things
A promise clings,
Of Creator kind and lenient.*

*In the soft June sky
The clouds go by
And smile on efforts wanted,
On plowed land
Where seeds expand
The breath of life is granted.*

*In the soft June eve
Pure nectars breathe
To refresh the whole creation;
Where His pencil shades
The greening glades
Are etched for man's contemplation.*

Robert K. Churchill

Celebration and Reflection

SIOUX CENTER CONFERENCE

Thomas C. Vanden Heuvel

The seven churches of Orange City and Sioux Center called a meeting of the churches of the Classes in Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, and South Dakota to celebrate the 125th anniversary of the CRC.

The commemoration was a celebration and a conference (at Dordt College, Sioux Center, Iowa) for reflection on Report #44, on the "Nature and Extent of Biblical Authority."

Celebration

The celebration on Tuesday evening, April 13, 1982, featured Dr. Lester De Koster, former editor of *The Banner*, and Dr. George Van Gronigen, president of Trinity Christian College.

Dr. De Koster spoke on our *Precious Heritage*. Our precious heritage is the *self-sufficient local church*, which enjoys self-sufficiency in five ways: 1. The local congregation enjoys all the marks of the true church: faithful preaching of the Word, faithful exercise of discipline and faithful administration of the sacraments; 2. The local congregation is self-sufficient because there Christ lodges primary and original authority as He rules through the scepter of the Word; 3. The local congregation is self-sufficient because here resides the power of the keys of the Kingdom; 4. The local congregation enjoys possession of the hermeneutical cycle, which is the proving grounds of the Word preached, so that the Word preached can be put to work; 5. The local congregation is self-sufficient as the ecclesiastical mother of the believers, baptizing, nourishing, disciplining, and preparing them for life hereafter. This heritage is our vision, says De Koster.

Dr. Van Gronigen challenged us with our *Promising Future*. The future can be promising as we maintain strong adherence to Scripture, and an unyielding adherence to our confessions. We need more development confessionally in the area of the covenant, the kingdom and the Holy Spirit, said Van Gronigen.

Debate

The next day 400-500 people came for the conference on Report #44. Many churches in the six classes

area sent delegates. The conference was divided into two parts. First was a debate between Dr. Gordon Spykman, Professor of Religion and Theology at Calvin College, and one of the authors of Report 44, and Dr. Lester De Koster. The topic of the debate was: "Should Report 44 continue to be the position of the CRC on the nature and extent of Biblical authority?" Dr. Spykman took the positive position and Dr. De Koster, the negative.

Dr. Spykman presented the current status, historical roots and main points of Report 44. Though the Synod of 1972 only adopted the seven pastoral guidelines, the Report 44 refuses to die. The roots of R. 44 are part of a quarter century of development. Spykman rehearsed the history of how the issue came to our Synod, as a request from the Gefor-meerde Kerken in the Netherlands, by way of the Reformed Ecumenical Synod. The G.K.N. now have answered their own question in the document entitled *GOD MET ONS*, which was reviewed thoroughly by Dr. Louis Praamsma in *The Outlook* — November, 1981.

In analyzing R. 44, Dr. Spykman pointed to the fact that it deals with a single plan of redemption from which point of view all Scripture is to be interpreted. R. 44 warns against an atomistic approach to Scripture.

Dr. De Koster in his position that the CRC does not need R. 44, asked two very basic questions: Who wants R. 44? And if one does want it, why does he want it?

Who wants R.44? The lay-people do not want it. It was not requested by anyone in the church. Neither do the host of critics want it. There are many who do not read and they do not want it either. Who really wants it? Those who profit from it want it. The theologian who wants to advance a speculative idea wants its protection. The actual *function* of R. 44 has been to secure room for theological speculation.

R. 44 has an "accordian effect," says De Koster. An accordian effect is used in novels, in which the hero and the heroine get close and then something comes to drive them apart. R. 44 has an accordian effect in this way: there are stirring creedal affirmations — what Scripture says, God says; but then there are the qualifying conditions presented, name-

ly, — the authority of Scripture is properly understood only when we open our minds concretely, know to whom it originally spoke, are aware of the historical-redemptive context and are aware of the cultural conditions in which it was spoken. Any theologian can “drive a speculative truck through this,” said De Koster. Another example of the accor-dian effect is this: Report 44 maintains that mystery surrounds the authority of the Bible on the one hand; but the next forty pages try to fathom the mystery. Another example is the statement that the Belgic Confession underlies this report and this report can only state the Belgic Confession in different ways; but in the development of this principle in Report 44, there are points stated which we do not find in the Belgic Confession at all.

Spykman replied in his rebuttal that in answer to the question, “who wants it,” the situation in the world demands a statement. We need to further define the nature of Scriptural revelation. “Who profits from it?” asks De Koster. Spykman replies: The whole church. Spykman suggested that in the points where R. 44 is rough, it should be “smoothed out,” and “cleaned up” so it can serve the church.

De Koster responded that the R. 44 never defined “authority.” What does God say authority is? In the story of Jesus and the centurion we see it. “I am also a man under authority,” said the centurion, “I say to my servant, do this and he does it, . . .” The Belgic Confession says simply: “Believe all things in it.”

De Koster also asked, “What are guidelines?” They are more than advice, less than law. “What are they? I cannot accept them.”

The pastoral advice is that for which no one asked. “If I were a pastor and gave advice that has been troubling the church for the last ten years, I’d seek another profession,” said De Koster.

Discussion

The panel discussion followed. The panelists were: Dr. Fred Klooster, professor of Systematic Theology at Calvin Seminary and one of the authors of R. 44, Rev. John Sittema, pastor of the 1st CRC, Pella, Iowa, Rev. Jelle Tuininga, pastor of the CRC, Lethbridge, Alberta, Dr. Alexander De Jong, pastor-emeritus, Chicago. The moderator of the panel was Dr. James De Jong, professor of Religion at Dordt College.

The moderator asked this question: “What is the problem with R. 44?” Dr. Klooster answered first: “I don’t know what the problem is. I don’t think the critics have told us. If it is simply the presence of the report, and its removal would bring unity, remove it. But the problem is deeper. There is mistrust and differences of opinion.”

Rev. Sittema said that R. 44 says good things in “snippets.” The problem with R. 44 is that it teaches that we have to get *through* and *behind* the Scripture to get at the *events* of the history of redemption. So the report drives a wedge between the event and the description of the event.

Rev. Tuininga said the heart of the issue is the way we look at Scripture, either atomistically or with its central focus on redemption. R. 44 helps us

to read Scripture correctly, so that we look at Scripture as the saving revelation of Jesus Christ.

Dr. A. De Jong said that though he had no problem with the redemptive focus of R. 44, he sees the problem in R. 44 as the same problem in R. 36, namely the R. 44 “leaves open the possibility to mutilate the text.”

Dr. Klooster responded to Sittema that the thrust of R. 44 is the reliability of the message. It has been used to put perimeters around Dr. Allen Verhey and Mr. Clayton Libolt. It has not been used officially to cover departures. — (Though the Synod of 1981 rejected the candidacy of Mr. Libolt using R. 44, he was endorsed by the Calvin Seminary faculty and Board of Trustees because they considered his position allowable within R. 44. The Synod of 1979 exonerated Dr. Verhey’s interpretation of Genesis 3, Matthew 19 and Matthew 28, following the recommendation of the Neland Ave. consistory which used R. 44 to do so. *Acts of Synod 1979, P. 93.*)

Dr. Alexander De Jong said that the walls around Scripture must be air tight. The Christian Church historically handled the doctrine of the natures of Christ at the Council of Chalcedon in 451 A.D. in that way, saying that the “human and divine natures of Christ are without mixture, without separation, without division and without change.” In a similar manner we must “box in” our doctrine of Scripture. The Christian Reformed Church should be a flagship on the sea, leading the way with a strong, uncompromising position on Scripture.

Resolutions

The conference of two delegates from each of the churches represented, adopted the following resolutions:

1. We thank God that we were able to discuss these differences today;
2. That the consistories who called the conference appoint a committee to prepare a mandate and appoint a committee to evaluate and present a critique of R. 44;
3. That the consistories address their concerns to this committee;
4. That the conference committee arrange for another conference in 1983 or 1984 to assess where we are.

Tapes of the speeches, debate and panel are available for \$6.00, from radio station KDCR, Sioux Center, Ia. 51250.

The Christian Reformed Church is put to a test after 125 years. Is she able to take hold of an issue which reaches to the very deepest roots of her existence and can she prove able to meet the challenge? The Mother Church in Holland surrenders to liberalism in *GOD MET ONS. What are we going to do? Our consistories have an awesome responsibility.*

Let us exercise the marks of the church, the keys of the kingdom, the original and primary authority Christ gave us, and with God’s help, direct the Church to “contend earnestly for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.” (Jude 3). ●

Rev. Thomas C. Vanden Heuvel is the pastor of the First Christian Reformed Church of Orange City, Iowa.

The Doctrine of Last Things

The Intermediate State (2)

Jerome M. Julien

Having seen something of the Biblical teaching about the intermediate state, we cannot move on to the area of general eschatology until we answer some questions that still remain and which in one way or another relate to the intermediate state.

One question arose only a short time ago when a young member of our congregation asked about the teaching of the Church of Rome called *purgatory*. A Roman Catholic neighbor had died and much emphasis was being placed on saying masses so that he could be released from purgatory as soon as possible. Understandably, her question was "What is purgatory?"

The other issue we should consider is one which is sometimes even heatedly discussed: Are there degrees of punishments and rewards?

FIRST, PURGATORY.

This is a distinctively Roman Catholic teaching. It is a place of punishment — expiatory suffering. The *Baltimore Catechism No. 3* (q. 184) of the Roman Catholic Church puts it this way:

Who are punished in purgatory?

Those are punished for a time in purgatory who die in the state of grace but are guilty of venial sin, or have not fully satisfied for the temporal punishment due to their sins.

In notes added by the Rev. John A. O'Brien in the edition of this catechism called *Understanding the Catholic Faith* (Ave Maria Press, Notre Dame, Ind., 1955), we read:

There will be no purgatory after the general judgment. Since we do not know how long individual souls are detained in purgatory, there is need for persevering prayer for the repose of the souls of all those who die after reaching the use of reason, except those who are canonized or beatified by the Church. The souls in purgatory are certain of entering heaven as soon as God's justice has been fully satisfied (130).

For Rome, purgatory is a place where the baptized go after death. It is a temporary stop between this earthly existence and heaven. But why? The name, itself, tells us: *purgatory*. It is a place of purging or purification. But why is this purging necessary?

Rome teaches that even though through baptism

the sinner has been purified completely and every debt of justice has been paid, still he sins. There are two kinds of actual sin: mortal and venial. The mortal sins are serious, conscious breakings of God's Law done with full consent which can only be removed through the Sacrament of Penance (individual confession and absolution done according to the rules of Vatican II). Unless they are removed, the sinner will be deprived of sanctifying grace and a right to everlasting happiness in hell. The venial sin

is a less serious offense against the law of God, which does not deprive the soul of sanctifying grace, and which can be pardoned even without sacramental Confession (*Baltimore Catechism*, q. 70).

These sins we always commit, Rome says, and these, though less serious, must be paid for in some way.

Perhaps the difference between mortal and venial sins can best be illustrated by these words from Rev. John A. O'Brien's *The Faith of Millions*:

... stealing is a sin; but if one steals merely a newspaper, it does not involve serious or grievous matter, and hence would be only a venial sin. If one were to steal a hundred dollars, however, the matter would be serious and the sin would be a mortal one (463).

According to Robert C. Broderick in *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (1976)

The purpose of purgatory is to cleanse one of imperfections, venial sins, and faults, and to remit or do away with the temporal punishment due to mortal sins that have been forgiven in the Sacrament of Penance. It is an intermediate state in which the departed souls can atone for unforgiven sins before receiving their final reward (502).

Thus purgatory is a place of punishment, but this punishment is understood as "pain of loss" or deprivation of the blessed sight of God. It is also physical pain. Strangely enough, it is *also* a place of joy. Rome says, just think of the pardon you receive. Remember the crown that awaits you. And don't forget the love which is expressed in the prayers offered in your behalf by the living.

By means of these prayers offered and masses said on behalf of those in purgatory, their stay is shortened and their sufferings relieved. Since no

one is sure just exactly how long a departed member of the Roman Catholic Church has to stay for purgating, prayers for the dead and masses said on their behalf are certainly encouraged. Of course, it should be added that the only way these masses can be said is if they are bought. Therefore, at death "spiritual bouquets" are given, often in place of flowers. These "spiritual bouquets" are sums of money given to the church in the name of the departed one so that the masses can be said.

Then, when at last the purification is complete that soul is released and allowed to go to heaven for the duration of the intermediate state — if there is any.

Is this taught in Scripture? Rome points to several passages, but none of them really teach a purgatory. (Cf. Isaiah 4:4; Micah 7:8; Zechariah 9:11; Malachi 3:2, 3; Matthew 5:22, 25, 26, 12:32; 1 Corinthians 3:12-15; Revelation 21:27.) Of course, Roman Catholics try to prove it from 2 Maccabees 12:43-45, in the Apocrypha. But even this does not speak of purgatory as they present it. That book, not a Scriptural one, is highly questionable as to its content.

It is true that Christians are not perfect in this life. We do not attain to perfect holiness here. There is, indeed, a purging but it takes place in this life (cf. Isaiah 6:7; Psalm 51:7; Malachi 3:3; John 15:2). Compare these verses in the King James and American Standard Versions of the Bible and you will see that purging takes place here and you will see how it takes place. Thankfully, "a man is not justified by the works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ (Gal. 2:16)."

It is not hard to see the error of the Romish doctrine of purgatory. Calvin puts it this way:

But if . . . the blood of Christ is the sole satisfaction for the sins of believers, the sole expiation, the sole purgation, what remains but to say that purgatory is simply a dreadful blasphemy against Christ (*Institutes*, III, v. 6).

It does away with the all-sufficient atoning work of Christ on Calvary because purgatory is a time of penal suffering. True, Rome indicates that the suffering of purgatory has no meaning nor power without Christ's suffering, but it is still an *addition* to Christ's work on Calvary. Thus it makes Christ's suffering only a partially powerful work.

NOW, DEGREES OF REWARDS AND PUNISHMENTS.

As soon as this subject is raised there are those who respond: "Heaven is Heaven; Hell is Hell. There are no elite in either Heaven or Hell." And it is for exactly this reason that we must see what the Scriptures say.

Of course, it is true that all who go to Heaven will be there because they are saved by grace, and because of that no one there will have any reason to boast. Also, all who go to Hell will be there under the just condemnation of God.

However, the Bible does teach that there will be degrees of rewards and punishments.

For some in Hell, we are told that it will be "more

tolerable" than for others (Matt. 11:22, 24). Some are said to "receive greater condemnation" (Luke 20:47). Also, Jesus spoke of judgment in terms of being beaten with many or few stripes (Luke 12:47, 48). The intensity of punishment depends, then, according to the light which they had. Hendriksen writes:

The fact that the degree of light which a person has received will make a difference in the teaching of Scripture throughout. This does not mean that those who sinned in a state of relative ignorance are completely without guilt. But it does mean that a just God does not leave out of account the privileges and opportunities which a person has enjoyed, or the lack of these advantages (*The Bible on the Life Hereafter*, 96).

Then he calls attention to Acts 3:17 and 1 Timothy 1:13.

A similar emphasis is found in Scripture concerning degrees of rewards in glory. In the Parable of the Pounds (Luke 19:11-27) we learn that we are to be faithful to God's cause and kingdom. That is our calling while we wait for the Lord's return. In this parable we are told that we will be rewarded in proportion to our faithfulness (vv 16-19). Now, obviously, this reward is not earned. It is all of grace, as is even our faithfulness. Commenting on this parable, Hendriksen writes in his *Exposition of the Gospel According to Luke* (861):

The nobleman, now king, praises both servants and assigns control over cities to both, to each in exact proportion to the profit made. Similarly, the Lord Jesus Christ, at his glorious return will praise his faithful servants and will reward them in proportion to the degree of faithfulness they have shown. They will be given an opportunity to render even greater service in the new heaven and earth.

This same truth might also be found in the Parable of the Talents (Matt. 25:14-30).

In 1 Corinthians 3:10-15 we are reminded that even though we are saved through faith in Jesus Christ, not all will receive the same reward. See also 1 Corinthians 3:8.

This does not mean, however, that those experiencing these rewards or punishments after death will be conscious of the degrees. Each one will experience to his fullest capacity what the Lord has for him. There will be no room for comparison, or in Heaven there would be imperfection. There will be no jealousy or anger for no one can experience any more or less than what he does. There will be complete joy, for instance, on the part of each one enjoying the Lord's gracious reward. Someone has illustrated it this way: Take a pint jar, a quart jar and a gallon jar. Pour each one full to the top so that it is full to capacity. No more can be put in; none is lacking in fulness. Yet, each one is different; and the difference is because of the jars' capacity. So it will be in the experience of rewards and punishments.

What, then, ought we to remember? "He that soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he that soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully (2 Cor. 9:6)."

Catechism without Learning

Jelle Tuininga

Now that catechism classes are drawing to a close, I want to make a few comments on this important topic. I do so on the basis of a bit of experience of my own and on things I've seen and heard in some of our churches. And on that basis I must immediately say that I'm not nearly as optimistic about the "new curriculum" (Bible Way) as some appear to be. Based on my experience and observation, I dare say that catechism instruction in our churches is at a low ebb, and in some cases it is a dismal failure. I really fear that in many respects we are raising a generation of ignoramuses when it comes to a knowledge of our Reformed confessions. And that does not augur well for a strong, creedally-informed church in the future. If I think back to my own parents and to many others of the older generation (many of whom had a very limited formal education) and take note of their knowledge of the Scriptures and of the Reformed confessions, then I am both amazed and ashamed. Amazed at their knowledge and understanding of the Reformed faith, and ashamed at how comparatively little the present generation (most of whom have far more formal education) understands of that faith.

A Sick Society

That has something to do with the whole of society, of course. Homes, schools and catechism classes have all been affected by our easy-going, pleasure-mad, entertainment-seeking society. The spirit of the age has infiltrated the church far more than we often realize. We are always "on the go" (but don't ask where) and seem to have so little time for quiet, concentrated study and Bible reading. We want everything to be easy, short, instant and entertaining. Television has helped make us that way.

New Curriculum

But now to more specifics. I believe the adoption of the new curriculum was in itself a partial capitulation to the spirit of the age around us. Catechism had to be more "interesting" and "entertaining." Who wanted to memorize any longer? What we needed was more discussion and debates, and various other activities that would make for a more "lively" class.

Abetting this shift was the trend in our churches away from having the minister do most of the teaching and toward having all kinds of other people doing it for him. This necessitated material which would fill the hour without too much "lecturing." And that's precisely what we have today, particularly in the *Bible Guide & Bible Crossroads* series. The "catechism" hour is largely taken up by reading and discussing a story (ostensibly illustrative of some doctrinal point), filling in the blanks, doing crossword puzzles, having "plays," etc. In no time the hour has disappeared, but don't ask what the students have learned. Generally it's precious little! When a mother asked her son what he had learned in catechism that day, he answered, "How to survive in a plane crash"! (That's what the story was about that session.) Somehow the "illustration" rather than the point it was supposed to illustrate stood out in this boy's mind. And I'm sure that wasn't the only time it happened. I've looked at some of these papers and lessons, and then I almost despair: Is that what we're teaching our children nowadays in catechism?

Concerned Mothers

We think we are doing our children a favor by having this kind of material, but we're not. Many

don't even like it; it doesn't challenge them at all. As one mother said to me, "It's an insult to their intelligence." Some students feel the same way. They thought they were going to catechism class to learn something, but they found out it was just another "Sunday School story." One twelve-year-old boy actually came home crying because he was so disappointed.

One sensitive and concerned mother from a neighboring congregation talked to me about this matter. She showed me some of the material her sons had to learn. Nothing at all was done with the catechism itself (notwithstanding Art. 64c of the Church Order). The time was spent in reading and discussing a story, filling in the blanks, etc. (The question and answer of the Catechism, was, after all, placed in some innocuous corner of the paper, where it could easily be ignored.) This mother went and sat in on one of the classes, and it only made her more upset. Most of the class time was spent in playing a game (role-playing). Nothing of substance was learned. She went home disgusted. One of the older teachers admitted to her that all he was really doing in catechism was "baby-sitting." Everything was laid out for him, and he just had to keep the process going. No *learning* was taking place. Here is just a sample of some of the material used in the lessons:

Remember how Tom was tempted by the stranger and eventually became lost? Remember how his relationship to Mr. Simms, his boss, was ruined? In somewhat the same way, Adam & Eve _____
(Tom was a truckdriver for Mr. Simms, J.T.)

Invent one "authority-obedience" situation. Tell who the person in authority is; what responsibility that person has, and *how* and *why* that person ought to be obeyed.

- a. Suppose Tom runs into trouble somewhere on the road to Omaha. What can he do in such a situation?
- b. What can man do when he makes mistakes in the management of the earth or when things go wrong for him?

A story dealing with the 5th commandment was entitled "My Old Man." Read and explain what the story says about honouring our parents.

How are we like the prodigal son? How are we like the older son? What would you do in such situations?

That is just a sampling. It may all sound rather cute and innocent, but how much actual *learning* is taking place? How long does it take to read and discuss the story? What time is there left to really teach the children the *words and concepts of the catechism* itself? I have taught this age children myself, using the excellent booklet by Hylkema & Tuuk, *First Book of Christian Doctrine*. WE had no stories, no games, no filling-in-the-blanks. I just explained to them in a simple way the key ideas of the lesson, and had them take a few notes. Both parents and children said they learned a lot. And I'm con-

vinced that if we'd go back to some of these older books and teach them some *real catechism*, we'd be much better off.

The mother I mentioned earlier said her children knew next to nothing about the catechism, while the children of her sister (who belonged to the Canadian Reformed Church) knew all the questions and answers by heart! They were expected to learn them, and learn them they did. But we think memorization is old-fashioned and too hard; as a result our children grow up ignorant of the catechism. Often it's not the children who are to blame, but the parents. The children can learn much rather easily in those young years, and if it is required, they will do it. And they would enjoy catechism more than they often do today. At least it would be worth their while.

A Dutch Minister's Observation

I came across an article the other day in a Dutch paper, written by a minister, dealing with this same topic. He admitted that at one time he himself had been bitten by the bug of "actualitis" (catechism classes must deal with actual problems in today's world & be "relevant"). Here's part of what he writes:

"Annie, tell me, what do you think of the pill?" Believe me, that the hour is gone before you know it.

"Well, what shall we talk about the next time?" Ten to one, one will say, "Abortion." "I want to talk about euthanasia, for that is timely (*actueel*)," says another. "I want to talk about the neutron-bomb" ("Ah," thinks the minister, "we could easily spend a couple of hours on that!"). "May we live together before marriage, pastor?"

And so it goes. It sounds so interesting (and "relevant"). But the end result is disaster, for these young people have not yet learned anything about the basics of the Bible and the Reformed confessions, and so they are not even competent to judge on the matters. They talk "through their hats." This minister then goes on to say that he came to see the foolishness of such an approach. HE says that a catechumen who spends no time learning the *facts* of the Bible will not grow up to be a mature member of the congregation. And why should we not learn something? Truly, the youth are willing to learn something and want to gain some knowledge. And that is as necessary as bread. Now that young men's and young ladies' societies have disappeared in large measure, let's make the most of catechism. "It amazes me to notice that even candidates for the ministry can hardly say a meaningful word about the providence of God, revelation, and the person of Christ at the classical exams." He concludes the article by saying: Mature members of the church are members who can contribute to the discussion in the church. "But then it first has to be given to them by way of the baby-spoon (*paplepel*). And not only milk but also solid food."

That's the way it is, also in the CRC. Our children, says Popma, must learn to confess the faith of their

fathers, often in the language of the fathers. To learn football or hockey, one must learn the technical terms of the game. So it is in matters of faith also. And we ought not to be so concerned about immediate relevancy (the *Revelation-Response* Bible series for schools errs in this respect). The relevance of what they learn will become evident later on. The groundwork must first be laid.

Teaching to Confess God's Word

I believe too that catechism instruction ought to be *confessionally* oriented and directed, cf. Church Order, Art. 63 — "as formulated in the creeds of the church." Actually Bible knowledge should first of all be the task of the home, and secondly of the school. But catechism must be confessional in nature. We must get away from this awful subjectivism that is so prevalent today, where each has his say or his opinion, but that's where it remains. This subjectivism is evident in some of the questions the students have to answer (cf. above). It is all rather open-ended. Each one can make of it what he or she desires. Real instruction in the truth of God's Word as

formulated in our confessions is largely lacking. And so no *intelligent* discussion or response can take place. One student summed it up this way: "We didn't learn a thing; all we had in catechism was a 'bull-session.'"

As church, we will reap what we sow. And I fear that unless we do some overhauling of our catechism system, the harvest will be grim. It may not be as bad all over as I have described it, but I hear plenty and see plenty that makes me plenty worried. I wish we had more concerned mothers like the one who talked to me who would discuss this matter with their consistories. And maybe we should go back to Hylkema & Tuuk and books of that nature. And perhaps Paideia Press should translate S. G. De Graaf's *De Rechten Des Verbonds* for us. It would stand us in good stead. Meanwhile, fathers and mothers and consistory members better find out what is taking place in the catechism classes of their children. For the eternal welfare of those children. ●

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News and Views

Elco H. Oostendorp

THE GREYING OF THE CRC. One of the improvements in the 1982 Yearbook of the CRC is listing the number of professing and non-professing members under the statistics of the individual churches. Perusing the new Yearbook I was struck by the fact that in many of the Canadian congregations these numbers are almost equal, while in several of our older congregations professing members outnumber the others more than two to one. By way of example, First Lacombe, Alberta, has 295 to 294 while in Burton Heights, Grand Rapids, the numbers are 535 and

203. Checking back to 1952, when there were only two Canadian classes we find the totals for the denomination to be 92,204 to 73,597 or approximately 2.15/1.8; in 1982 the figures are 179,518 to 117,204 for a ratio of about 3/2. However for the nine Canadian classes we find 41,256 to 37,171 of 2/1.8. For the remaining U.S. churches the totals are 138,262 to 80,033 or approximately 7/4. Perhaps professions of faith are made in the U.S. at younger ages, but a comparison of church school enrollments would seem to indicate that the main difference is a drop in

family size and an increasing proportion of senior members. As we come to the 125th anniversary of the denomination we are greying!

* * *

EARLIER CHURCH SERVICES. In a news report in *Christianity Today* of February 19, 1982, on "A Look at the Local Church of the Future" mention is made of the fact that worship services are starting earlier on Sunday mornings. The traditional 11 o'clock morning service is too late for many. Factors mentioned as back of this change are "fewer hours spent in sleeping on the average, a desire to free more of the day up for family activities after church — and the National Football League. According to Schaller (author of the article being reviewed, E.H.O.) the NFL has been 'an obvious factor in increasing church attendance at earlier services during the autumn.' "

* * *

A DECLARATION BY TWO THEOLOGICAL FACULTIES is the title of an Editorial in *De Wachter* for March 16, 1982. The Editor, Rev. William Haverkamp, reacts to an article found in *Centraal Weekblad*, a periodical of the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands. The Dutch government has published a proposal for a law forbidding discrimination against people who are practicing homosexuals or unmarried people living together. Some boards of Christian schools have expressed concern that this would interfere with the right of such schools to apply their standards in employment. The faculties of the Theological School (Kampen) and the Theological Faculty of the Free University (Amsterdam) reacted to this concern of the school boards by publishing a declaration in which they protest this action. They regard it as "being very insulting (kwetsend) for those concerned, and find it to be disappointing and shameful that such ideas should especially be held in Christian circles." They conclude: "Both faculties therefore expressly call upon boards of Christian schools not to exclude any persons from teaching on the ground that they are homosexual or live together without being married." Prof. Dr. J. C. de Moor, rector of the Kampen faculty, did not agree with this declaration as far as unmarried cohabitants is concerned. Lest one get the impression that this is the position of all leaders in the GKN I may add that in a following editorial Rev. Haverkamp quotes at length from an article in *Centraal Weekblad* in which Dr. Bonda writes about "Emancipation and Modern Morality" and calls attention to the fact that application of the proposed antidiscrimination law to unwed people living together implies approval of such life-style and undermines the Biblical teaching concerning marriage.

THE BIBLE BEHIND THE IRON CURTAIN. *The Bible Society Record*, monthly magazine of the American Bible Society, for March, 1982, has a very interesting "Eastern Europe UPDATE 1982." The article begins: "As in many other parts of the world a resurgence of interest in the Scriptures is evident throughout Eastern Europe. With the single exception of Albania, where any form of religious witness is strictly forbidden by law, the Word of God is gradually becoming more widely available in many of these countries. In Hungary, for example, the Bible is now being used as a textbook in the public schools, and in Yugoslavia copies are even sold in state bookshops." Reports are given in detail about Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Russia, and Yugoslavia. While the number of Bibles being printed is small compared to population there are thousands of copies, and new translations. This doesn't mean that persecution and opposition by the atheistic governments is relaxing, as an article on the church in Czechoslovakia in the April *Moody Monthly* demonstrates, but knowing that the Word of God will not return to Him void, we may rejoice that many are able to read it. A complete report on Scripture distribution in Eastern Europe is promised in the May 1982 *Record*.

* * *

ARE WE LOSING OUR RELIGIOUS FREEDOMS? This is the question asked by Martin Mawyer in a two-part article in the March and April numbers of *Moody Monthly*. His thesis is that "Many Christians are now in court trying to overcome regulations that restrict their beliefs and religious liberties. They fight government statutes, overreaching bureaucrats, and antagonistic organizations and individuals." He documents this with many startling stories of clashes between ministers and other church leaders and law enforcement officials and courts. Some of these have been reported in the news media, but others will be new to many of us. A couple of examples taken at random — In Arkansas a man is suing a minister for \$1 million charging that his sermons have alienated the affections of his wife by teaching that all men are sinful creatures. A realtor in Virginia used the slogan "Jesus Is Coming" on his advertizing together with the fish symbol to let customers know he is a Christian; HUD ordered him to remove them as involving religious discrimination. In the second article he illustrates how the IRS can discriminate against churches and schools. Communities have used zoning laws to keep out new congregations considered "undesirable" and have set standards that make it prohibitively expensive for small groups to meet. Also Christian schools are often harassed by the strict application of building codes, etc. which are often not also applied to public schools. Although one cannot always agree with the people who are being prosecuted, the articles serve as a much needed and shocking warning of the dangers that threaten our hard-won religious freedom.

CRC Synod Agenda

Peter De Jong

The published *Agenda* for the June synod is again being sent to all Christian Reformed Churches so that all of their officers may become acquainted with the matters to be taken up at the churches' largest assembly. As usual, the *OUTLOOK* reviews the book for its readers. This year's issue is shorter than many have been (421 pages) and contains few long reports. The reports of boards, standing committees, denominationally related agencies and study committees and the overtures and printed appeals give many interesting glimpses of denominational life, although they necessarily focus attention on matters that require decision.

Radio and TV

One of the most encouraging of the reports is, as usual, that of the Back-to-God Hour. Through our electronic means of communication we continue to bring God's unchanging gospel in a changing and troubled world. The English language broadcasts of the regular Back-to-God programs go out over about 200 stations and several other programs go out on a more limited basis. The TV FAITH/20 program is primarily Bible teaching.

Programs in the Arabic language were our denomination's first foreign-language venture, and are one of the most effective ways of reaching into the Muslim world which is largely closed to other forms of missionary contact.

140 stations carry our Spanish radio broadcasts in South America, 4 local stations carry them in Spain and 8 carry them in the U.S.

11 stations in Brazil and the Trans World Radio in Bonaire carry the gospel message in Portuguese.

French broadcasts go out in Europe and Africa as well as Canada.

About 65 stations in Indonesia carry our broadcasts in the Indonesian language.

About 75% of China's enormous population can hear our broadcasts in Chinese. Japan is covered by Japanese broadcasts and a beginning has been made in Russian broadcasting.

An important part of this radio and TV outreach has been its follow-up with correspondence and literature.

Calvin College and Seminary

Calvin's board of trustees' 8-page report devotes 2 pages to the views of the seminary faculty which have raised questions in the churches (expressed in several overtures to the coming synod). In the June 1981 *OUTLOOK* Rev. N. Hegeman reported that in 1980 he had "protested the view of an Old Testament professor who did not believe Adam was a historical person" and that the board, in response to his protest, had appointed a committee to deal with the issue. The board now states (p. 42), on one hand, "that Professor Stek, along with other members of the faculty, affirmed his agreement with the creeds" and, on the other hand, that a faculty committee continue discussion with him, and progress be reported "toward a resolution of this question." The board proceeded to make a public statement reassuring the churches that the "Seminary faculty without exception believe Adam and Eve were created by God and are our first parents . . . accept the reality of an historical fall as recorded in the Scriptures" and that it is "assured that our faculty is in full agreement with the confessions of our church." (If there is no question about this matter, why must a committee work "toward resolution of the question"?)

The Board also approved of proposals of the seminary faculty to take special measures to recruit and train "minority students" including the use of 20-25% of the time of two of the staff and securing "the services of a minority-race teacher" (p. 44). While all students should be encouraged to prepare for fulfilling their calling to the gospel ministry, are not such special *racially*-conditioned and directed programs indulging in the racism we ought to be eliminating?

World Missions

Our world missions have regular missionaries in 18 countries.

Central America continues to be a troubled area because of volatile political conditions. The Board, at the instigation of Classis Toronto, wants the synod to issue a "Testimony on Justice and Oppression." What that "testimony" is we are not told, but the

discussion about it indicates that it involves our missionaries getting and relaying information so that the churches here may pressure their governments regarding their policies and the dealings of their businesses in those parts of the world (pp. 52-54, 80). Thus "the board calls upon synod to identify itself and our congregations with the poor and oppressed in those lands where injustice rules." One wonders at this point whether we are dealing with the report of a mission or of a political party. While we have political responsibilities, for the churches' mission board to call for partisan political manifestos is Biblically indefensible and is certain to provoke trouble for missionary work. Where does the Bible ever tell us that Christians must "identify" only with the poor? We must seek to help neighbors whether rich or poor. Socialistic pronouncements that seek to pit one class against another and that agitate against governments which are fighting for their lives against communist guerillas, however common they are in today's liberal churches, are not serving the cause of Christ.

The Board report devotes about 7 pages to the very troublesome problems which arise because our denomination in many places has two separate agencies working among the same people with differing concerns and very little consultation and cooperation between the two. The missions seek to bring the gospel and the world relief committee people seek to give material help. This "word" and "deed ministry" instead of working together, according to the report, are increasingly becoming separated. The results are confusion and possible abuse. "A single field administration is an absolute necessity if tactical mistakes and frustrations are to be avoided." An elaborate plan for "coordinated ministry" is proposed to get greater cooperation between the two organizations, but it is admitted that "the plan does not resolve the problem of a divided administration. The CRC ministry continues to have more than one face." (p. 62). Should the synod not unify the churches' outreach into these fields? In the history of missions, material and social help, begun with sincere intentions, have often displaced the gospel as the focus of attention and, by becoming a "social gospel," become no gospel at all. Our divided activities with the help programs operating independently, appear to offer an unusually favorable opportunity for such a liberal perversion of our Christian mission.

In a more encouraging vein, our missionary agency calls to our attention that in contrast with the often gloomy secular news out of Africa, mission reports from that continent are an amazing success story. "Christians now make up nearly 40 percent of Black Africa's population." The report tells us that some 350,000 people now attend church services in our Africa field, 250,000 of them among the Tiv. (Compare that with our denomination's total membership of less than 300,000 to appreciate how remarkably God has blessed these missionary labors. The growing Tiv seminary which now has an enrollment of about 50, this year received a \$64,000 building grant from our mission board.

Home Missions

The Board of Home Missions devotes about 4 pages of its report to appreciative and critical comment on the "church growth movement." Both the appreciation and the criticism merit attention. While the movement has stressed the churches' missionary responsibility, its strong emphasis on producing growth, setting and achieving goals, etc. seems to do less than justice to missions as the Lord's work. This stress on achieving results reminds one of Charles Finney's efforts to turn evangelism into a calculated mechanical process, whose disastrous results eventually led Finney to admit that many of his "converts" turned out to be a disgrace to the name "Christian" — a "salt that had lost its savor" (Luke 14:25-35). Although the board criticizes the weaknesses of the "church growth" movement, its efforts to "program" the growth of its missions suggest that our missionary labors may not have altogether escaped from the failings of every human effort to impose a uniform schedule on the work of God's Word and Spirit.

Publications

Our publication board, speaking of its "united church school curriculum," notes that whereas "ten years ago, some of these courses were suspect; now they are widely trusted and used, both within and beyond the" CRC, being used by "more than nineteen out of twenty" of the CR congregations. This may be an indication of improvement of material. Another possibility (one which is suggested by J. Tuininga's critical comments in another article) is that after ten years of having officially abandoned the Heidelberg Catechism as the basis of our education program, many of our churches no longer attempt to discriminate regarding what is being taught, simply leaving that to the denomination's official board to determine.

Traditionally in many churches' catechism classes studies were structured either around Bible History (for younger classes) or Bible doctrines as organized in the Catechism (for older classes). This system was abandoned to be replaced by materials planned and structured by our board and its appointees. What now determines what will be taught? Is it the Bible, or is it the opinions of a committee that selects themes and illustrations from the Bible which it thinks will be "interesting" or "relevant" to people's present problems and tastes? It is quite possible, with a little careful selection and ingenuity, to produce interesting Biblical materials to illustrate and promote ideas which were never derived from the Bible at all or might even be contrary to it. Is the Bible determining our educational agenda or are we determining what we still wish to use, (and what we choose to ignore) in the Bible? The complaints and requests for material which we receive from time to time suggest that some of our church's official productions, despite their efforts to be "interesting," are by no means satisfactorily replacing the old, if less colorful, "catechisms."

We also have to object to our publication board's

publishing materials such as the recently issued *Men and Women; Partners in Service* which promotes a viewpoint on the controversial matter of women in office that is contrary to Scripture and the church's creeds. (See the review article in the March OUTLOOK.)

It is proposed that our official Dutch church paper, *De Wachter* cease publication on or before Jan. 1, 1986.

The Board proposes to create a new position of "Music Editor."

The Board also suggests that the synod consider whether in future planning some of the denomination's agencies ought not to move their activities outside of Grand Rapids. Should we try to decentralize these activities (pp. 118, 119)?

World Relief

The world relief program, which began as a Christian effort to help disaster victims, has come to concentrate more heavily on giving aid in various parts of the world. Questions arise about the way in which that aid is channeled. Should we be supporting CEDEN (The Evangelical Committee for Development and National Emergency) in Central America or the liberal Church World Service (in Italy)? And what must one say of the work of our 5 people in Bangladesh when the report admits "the complete lack of an evangelistic program. Humanly speaking, it is doubtful that the Muslim government will approve of an evangelism strategy in this area" (p. 127)?

Bible Translation

The Bible Translation Committee after a study of the *New American Standard Bible* would recommend this version for use in Bible study because of its literalism (but not for reading in churches, because it does not read easily). It also asks that the Synod dismiss the committee as no longer needed.

Interchurch Relations

The Interchurch Relations report devotes 24 pages to the account given by Dr. John Kromminga and Rev. Clarence Boomsma of their month-long visit in South Africa. Their visit had to deal especially with a request that we recognize the large Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa as a "church in ecclesiastical fellowship" with us. In 1974 we discarded the more restrictive category of "sister church" and began receiving a variety of churches in this looser, larger relationship, including, for example, the Reformed Church in America. Usually since 1974 there has been little question about establishing such loose church relations. Why should there be any question in this case? The large South African church is the church to which many of the leaders in the South African government belong. In view of the widespread criticisms of the South African "apartheid" policy, questions have been raised here about whether that South African church body was repudiating and was opposing that "apartheid" policy in a way that satisfied some of the leaders in

our churches. While the committee freely admits the sincere Christianity of the DRC, and their missionary labors and successes among and helpfulness to non-whites, it recommends that our Synod answer neither "Yes" nor "No" to the request for recognition by that church. It sees such a temporizing policy as a way of bringing pressure to bear upon that South African church to condemn "apartheid." While the committee admits that it cannot judge the situation in that country, it makes many judgments. While we do not endorse South African government policies, the recommended refusal of fellowship to these orthodox Reformed churches because they do not share our political views while we cheerfully continue fellowship with churches which tolerate and promote liberalism such as the RCA in this country and the GKN in the Netherlands seems to reveal only too plainly where the real sympathies and priorities of our Interchurch Relations leaders lie.

Four of the other church bodies who together with us form the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Church Council (NAPARC) are to hold their general assemblies at the same time as our churches' synod, all meeting at Calvin College this year.

The Interchurch Relations report makes only a passing mention of the Reformed churches in the Netherlands, stating that our 1973 report on Homosexuality, which has been criticized by the liberal Dutch churches, has been defended by a committee consisting of Rev. C. Boomsma, Dr. Henry Stob and Dr. Melvin D. Hugen (all of whom were compilers of that somewhat ambiguous report). (Note the article on this subject in the May OUTLOOK.)

Liturgy

The Liturgical Committee presents forms for ordination of elders, deacons and evangelists and for excommunication and readmission, for final approval, and a form for ordination and inauguration of ministers, for provisional approval. Although it comments that its work of revision is substantially completed, it continues to envision a job for the committee. Has the time not come to lay this committee to rest?

Reviewing the forms raised a few questions of proper usage. The expression "office-bearers," despite its prevalence among us, seems to be a Dutchism, which evidently has no recognized place in the English language. In English the word should be "officers" or "office-holders." The loose and rather faddish use of the word "share" in "share with all the good news of salvation" (p. 197) is, no doubt, intended to mean to "communicate" or "bring" to all the good news of salvation. It may also be taken, however, to imply a loose universalism. The word "witness" (pp. 197, 200) in Biblical terms means in almost every case an "eye-witness." Its loose use to refer to any kind of Christian speaking of the gospel to others, although common, is really misleading. The Biblical expression is "confess" — to "say the same thing" as God says. More deliberate than these questionable usages is the fact that in each of the forms

where the old questions read "Do you believe . . . the Old and New Testament to be the only Word of God?" the "only" is dropped out. (And the old form is no longer included in the newer hymn books as an option.) In the charge to the elders Acts 20:28 is misquoted in what is presented as a quotation. In the form for the minister's ordination we read that "he should show that the church exists for the world" — a liberal cliché that is unBiblical and false! The forms for discipline and readmission, when compared with the older ones, seem brief and flat. Some valuable material of which the church ought to be reminded is left out. There is, for example, no longer any reference to Satan. Such a reference may not be popular in our time, but it seems the more appropriate when Satan has the freer rein in the church because even the church functionaries never think of his part in their church problems.

Ministers' Pensions

The Agenda contains 74 pages on ministers' pension matters. They deal mainly with the separation of Canadian and U.S. pensions and a proposed change in the manner of establishing the amount of the pensions.

Race

The Race committee (SCORR) devotes much of its attention to its newer programs of trying to recruit, train and promote the leadership of members of minority races in the churches. While help to all kinds of poor and to all kinds of students who feel called to and are being prepared for leadership is to be encouraged, the main problem of the SCORR programs is that they are designed to give help and advantages on a selective basis only to members of certain races. That kind of racial discrimination is exactly the "sin" which this committee is supposed to be working to eradicate. SCORR's budget for 1982 amounts to \$268,000 (a fact not reported in the *Agenda* but which can be learned from the 1981 *Financial and Business Supplement to the Agenda*, Section I, p. 12g — This document, unlike the regular *Agenda*, is not given to the ordinary consistory member). The committee is asking for a quota increase from \$2.70 to \$2.92 per family. How can we expect the South Africans to be impressed with our admonitions to stop their racial discrimination when we officially practice and promote this discrimination on the basis of race within our churches?

Synodical Interim Committee

The Synodical Interim Committee calls attention to the fact that nearly 33 percent of our active ministers are not serving congregations, but are engaged in other types of service and that in many cases questions ought to be raised about whether they should retain their ministerial status because of the nature of their work. It cites the prolonged leaves of absence, carelessness about placement of credentials and similar abuses, and proposes that the synod take some action to correct these irregularities.

Dancing

A study committee makes a report on "Dance and the Christian Life." This 19-page document surveys the churches' views and practices with respect to dancing, and their earlier studies and decisions, and canvasses the material in the Bible on the subject. Although it makes many fine observations which will, undoubtedly, invite general agreement, its inconclusive conclusions may not give much help in the problems that surfaced in connection with the toleration of dancing at Calvin College. Although the report warns against the evils of much of today's dancing, it also suggests trying to find a place for dancing in church worship, as well as trying to figure out ways to "redeem" social dancing.

Contemporary Testimony

This committee, seeking to formulate a statement of our faith in contemporary language in view of contemporary problems, presents a "sample of the summary of its work." This "sample" in a somewhat poetic form is as imprecise and vague as its title. What does this mean, for example? "As children of our times, this struggle of the spirits is also ours," "this" in the context referring to unbelievers' common problems? Its hopeful ending also contains no hint of an accompanying judgment. As I see it, the problem of such a "contemporary testimony" is precisely in its "contemporaneity." In trying single-mindedly to say what people of our time want to hear it is likely to say only what they already know, and likely to ignore what to them is irrelevant or distasteful, but what God has said that we must tell them. A "gospel" that does not offend our contemporaries is no real gospel at all.

Healing Ministries

For some 4 years the synodical interim committee has had a subcommittee working on the problem raised by the increasing number of ministers who are having trouble in their churches, who resign, or in other ways are leaving the ministry. As a remedy, this committee now proposes the establishment of a new Pastor-Church Relations Committee, a denominational Minister of Pastor-Church Relations at a central office, Regional Pastors under him, and "Mentors" to be appointed for each new minister, or minister who gets into trouble or who desires help. This introduces a whole new level of bureaucracy paralleling the organizational structures which we already have, and largely ignoring the role of the classes — their "church visitors" are dismissed with the remark that "in some instances" they "are not qualified" (p. 382). While there are real problems in churches, it would seem that introducing a new set of "bishops," beside being incompatible with the church order's principle of the equality of officers (Art. 95, "no office-bearer shall lord it over another office-bearer"), is inviting more trouble and abuse than it could remedy. Dealing with these problems should be by way of improving the activities of the classis, not by imposing a new order of sovereign

bishops. Important contributors to the low morale of our ministers are their training and the problems of serving in an increasingly confused and double-minded church. The "healing ministry" proposals address the symptoms, not the disease.

A proposed change of Church Order Article 17 (pp. 382, 383) to provide for release of a minister before conditions become "intolerable" seems highly desirable.

The report also suggests introducing "calls" for a limited time, calling attention to the fact that some of our agencies have such an arrangement. Notice how the whole notion of a divine call for life is being lost from sight in this suggestion. When a minister holds office only as long as he can remain popular he is tempted to become a vote-seeking politician instead of a preacher of righteousness.

The committee also asks the synod to recommend a document on "How to Call a Pastor" without showing us what that document is.

Quotas

The last part of the agenda includes overtures and appeals. Classis Alberta North asks the synod to establish a new area for the computation of Calvin Quotas to include the churches of western Canada because the present arrangement is inequitable. Classis Grand Rapids East asks the synod to change the whole quota system from a flat rate per family to one graduated on the basis of each family's and each church's income. Implicit in this suggestion is the assumption, long characteristic of this classis as well as other areas of our denomination, or insisting on treating quotas as a "tax" which if unpaid makes the individual or church a "delinquent." Despite the fact that the synod repudiated that idea decades ago when it threw out the notion of "assessments," characterizing "quotas" as a recommended average, the classis now wants to establish an "income tax." An income tax is undoubtedly more equitable than a flat-rate, but the churches' giving in the service of Christ be perverted much further than to turn it into a system of extraction patterned after that of the IRS?

Classis GR East also wants the synod to decree that the ministers and laymen must be equally represented in the delegations to church boards.

Baptism of Adopted Children

Classis Grand Rapids South asks that the synod change the policy of leaving some room for individual consciences regarding whether or not adopted children be baptized, and insist that they be baptized just as those born into a family. The classis believes that it is unBiblical to wait with their baptism until the adoption is legally finalized, for example. I believe that the classis is mistaken in this argument. Romans 3:2 states that the "chief" benefit of God's covenant is that to its members "are committed the oracles of God." If the chief benefit is the assurance of Christian training, we must consider that that training cannot be promised until the adoption is legalized. If legal procedures in making

adoptions final may vary in various states and provinces, insisting on a uniform practice of immediate baptism seems to be improper.

Overture 5 asks the synod to establish standards for specialized ministries in the churches. Has the need for such a synod decision been shown? Classis Huron (#6) asks that training be provided for short-time volunteer mission service.

Salary Schedules

Classis Kalamazoo asks that the salary schedule of the fund for needy churches be brought in line with that of the home missionaries, observing that in a given case the salary of a home missionary might be as much as \$4000 higher than that paid by a subsidized church. The overture exposes a real inequity which ought to be corrected. (It might have gone on to point out that when a church is no longer subsidized by the denomination the pastor's salary may get a further cut.) A reason for the discrepancy is that while the FNC salaries must still be approved by the synod (p. 159), the higher salaries of home missionaries are determined by their board and merely reported to the synod (p. 106), (and the still higher salaries of "executives" are determined by executives and are not even reported in this agenda, while what may be the lowest are determined by consistories and congregations). Many of our members and delegates may ask why they should be paying denominationally employed ministers and executives increasingly higher salaries than their own ministers, while they themselves may even have to be taking pay cuts. (See article in March OUTLOOK).

Candidacy and Seminary Training

Classis Lake Erie, because last year's synod denied Mr. Libolt candidacy to the ministry when he refused to affirm the historicity of events in Genesis, asks the synod to change examination procedures so as to make such a summary rejection impossible (Overture 9). It offers no evidence that the synod erred in its judgment, but merely asserts that it was unfair because of the student's long study, because he had been approved by others, because Dr. Verhey had been admitted, etc. These certainly are no grounds for denying the synod's right to refuse anyone candidacy because of heretical views.

Five other overtures (11, 12, 15, 19, 21) arise from Mr. Libolt's approval by the seminary faculty and board before he was decisively rejected by the synod. They request investigation of the views held and taught in our seminary and the assurance that our seminary professors believe that Adam and Eve really existed, pointing out that our adhering to the Bible and maintaining faithfulness to our confessions is in question in this matter.

Political Activism

Classis Lake Erie (#10) also wants the synod to insist that the South African churches take a stand against the Broederbond, a powerful political organization in that country and the Halifax church (#22) wants the synod to break off our long-standing rela-

tions with the Gereformeerde Kerk in Suid Afrika (not the same as the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa) because of their failure to condemn the Broederbond. The Interchurch relations committee report shows the inappropriateness of such proposed actions (p. 182).

Classis Chicago South proposes that the Synod revise and adopt the 1964 "Statement on Warfare." The ambiguities and qualifications of this document shed little light on the subject, and adopting it would likely only lend support to current attempts especially by religious leaders to weaken any serious resistance to the militant aggressions of communism in our time. Why should the churches address double-talk to governments regarding matters in which they have neither a Biblical mandate nor competence?

Discipline

The Southern Heights church of Kalamazoo (#14) wants to abandon "excommunication" as too offensive for our times, and Classis Muskegon (#13) wants to modify the way of dealing with sins especially against the 7th commandment.

Appeals

Classis Chicago South appeals the decision of last year not to allow a minister to serve as president of Trinity College and retain his ministerial status.

Classis Hackensack wants to reopen the lodge question, alleging that admission of lodge members is the right of a local church.

Classis Sioux Center asks for a review of the Goderich case of 1980. ●

PASTOR JAILED for starting a church school

A pastor HAS BEEN PUT IN JAIL for doing nothing more than conducting a church ministry.

Now I'm not talking about a minister being jailed in the Soviet Union. I'm talking about a pastor being jailed right here in America — in Louisville, Nebraska.

On February 18, 1982, District Judge Raymond Case found Pastor Siliven in "contempt of court" because he would not submit his church educational ministry to state licensing.

The court said Pastor Siliven broke 14 Nebraska state laws when he started a church school without state approval.

Pastor Siliven has already spent 12 days in jail. At the moment of this writing he is free, pending the outcome of new legal proceedings. Meanwhile, his church school is closed by action of the state, and he could be jailed again any day ... perhaps even before you receive this letter.

The sheriff has chained and padlocked the school and only allows the congregation in the church for Sunday morning services and Wednesday evening prayer meetings.

The danger of this action is staggering.

Anti-Christian administrators in other states will be watching closely to see if the Nebraska courts can quietly get away with this outrage.

This fight is critical to the survival of free Christian churches and schools. Many other cases are developing, but this Siliven case is the most critical test case in the nation now.

The true story of Pastor Siliven begins in Washington, D.C., at the National Education Association (NEA).

The NEA is a liberal humanist education organization that has long pushed for federal funding and federal control of our nation's schools. So it's easy to see why the NEA is opposed to private religious education.

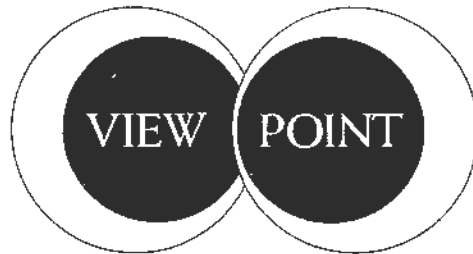
And on top of that the Nebraska branch of the NEA is one of the largest contributors of campaign funds for state-elected officials in Nebraska! Even the Nebraska Commissioner of Education is hand-picked by that group.

Please don't make the mistake of thinking quality education is the issue here. It isn't. Pastor Siliven's school children perform much better on national test scores than do the children of tax-supported Nebraska public schools.

The real issue here is religious freedom. The state's purpose is control of all education, philosophy and curriculum, public and private. The power to license is the power to control.

Nebraska is the test case: If that state is successful in its attempts to control and silence Pastor Siliven and his church school, you can be sure other states will follow. ●

Excerpts from a newsletter of Dr. D. James Kennedy of Fort Lauderdale, Florida, who is seeking to arouse support for this embattled minister and Christian school.



The Bethel Series

In our time of confusion and widespread ignorance of the Bible many churches have become interested in programs for more effective Bible teaching to their members. We understand that a number of our churches have adopted for that purpose and used with considerable enthusiasm *The Bethel Series*. While effective ways to encourage more thorough Bible study are to be welcomed, our attention has also been called to some criticism of important weaknesses and dangers in this material.

The series originated in a large Lutheran church and, although used by many denominations, has been especially popular among Lutherans. It is therefore the more readily understandable that it has been critically discussed in the Lutheran *Christian News* (July 28, 1975; Sept. 6, 1976). The criticisms point out that at the very beginning the material pointedly leaves the door open for evolution by its insistence that "THE MESSAGE OF THE BIBLE IS RELIGIOUS IN THRUST NOT SCIENTIFIC" (p. 3), interpreting the account to say little more than "Creation is good!" It is observed that man's creation in the image of God is given "fuzzy" treatment. With a few derogatory warnings against "a wooden literalism," the treatment of the Fall is weak and stresses "disharmony" rather than "sin," although sin is mentioned, "total depravity" and "original sin" are conspicuously absent. And the question is raised "1. Was Adam an individual in historical antiquity or does Adam imply corporate humanity?". While Genesis 3:15 gets passing and vague treatment and the "flood account" is bypassed with a line, we are told that "God's Plan for Triumph Began With a Covenant/Genesis 12:1-3,"

made with Abraham. We are told that "The great event in Israel's early history ... took place ... when God found a man called Abram and placed in his hands a destiny which was designed to change the course of events in heaven and on earth." We are told that "even among imperfect men, God found those who won his special favor. (Gen. 5:21-24; Gen. 6:7-9; 7:1). The Scripture suggests that the positions of leadership went to those men, who, in spite of their weaknesses, demonstrated strength of character which permitted God to depend upon them to carry the destiny forward" (p. 30). Note the series' emphasis on human initiative and merit instead of the Biblical stress of God's sovereignty. Attention is called to the curious treatment of some messianic prophecy. "1. A major prophetic theme in the Old Testament narrative has not been discussed; namely, the suffering servant motif. In your opinion does the servant refer to an individual; to the Hebrew nation as a whole; or to all three? Note: Is. 42:1-7; 49:1-6; 52:13-15; 53:1-12" (p. 116). It is also evident that the writer of this material simply assumes the common Liberal notion of 2 Isaiahs for he speaks of "Deutero-Isaiah as exilic and post exilic" (p. 120).

Although the *Bethel Series* is attractive and includes material which invites our hearty agreement, a consideration of the criticism that has been brought against it and of the way in which the series plainly gives grounds for that criticism suggests that our readers should be warned of its deficiencies and errors. We may often be able to profitably use materials that have weaknesses, but the weaknesses in this case are not incidental; they are serious enough to warrant an extra word of caution. PDJ

Homemaking— NEGLECTED CALLING

It doesn't take much cultural awareness nowadays to realize that a "house-wife" or "home-maker" is on the lowest rung of the social ladder today, as far as societal values go. To be called a home-maker today is certainly not a badge of honor. People still refer to "motherhood" with some sense of nostalgia, but in actual fact it is no longer held in high esteem.

Meanwhile we're reaping all the dire results of such an attitude: unattended children, increase in day-care centers with their cost to the public, increased juvenile delinquency, higher than usual unemployment and, last but not least, the rising abortion rate with all its devastating ramifications. One of the up-coming things now is the after-school-care of children whose mothers are at work. And the public is expected to pay for that, too. Of course, we must be sensitive to the needs of our society and be willing to lend a helping hand. But we should first get at the *roots* of these problems, rather than treating symptoms.

While I'm writing this we're undergoing a nurses' strike in Alberta. One of the striking nurses, in trying to gain sympathy from the public said: You should realize that when we come home from work we have tired husbands and cranky kids waiting for us. Our work isn't done with a shift at the hospital. To which I am inclined to reply: Why didn't you stay home in the first place? You knew what you were getting into when you entered the nursing profession. What's more important: home and family, or that extra paycheck? I can sympathize with the old man who rolled down his car window to say to the picketing nurses: "Why don't you go home and do something constructive like cleaning the house?"

Mothers in my congregation have told me that when they were in the hospital having their third, fourth or fifth(!) baby, there was consternation and at times thinly veiled ridicule among the staff and other patients. Some women said the only reason they were having a third baby was because the first two were either both boys or girls, and they decided to try once more for one of the opposite sex. But this was it!

That's the kind of society we're living in. A society where God's ordinances are being increasingly flaunted and ridiculed. But such is to be expected in a society which is ignorant of God's Word or chooses to reject it. What is infinitely more sad, however, is that we find more and more of this attitude in the church, including the CRC. While one has a right to expect opposition to such a worldly trend, we find accommodation, being conformed to the world instead of being transformed by the renewal of our minds.

Even the editor of *The Banner* is jumping on the bandwagon of late. In an editorial, "Mothers & Daughters," (Feb. 15 issue) he says, "I thought that I should tell the church to accept a new situation with respect to the place of women in the homes, in society, and in the congregations." The occasion which prompted the editorial was a campus worship service where "a woman was the liturgist." He goes on to say:

There are many women at Calvin. They are taught competence, confidence, and equality. . . . We cannot refuse tomorrow what we are ordering today. We cannot expect women to unlearn when they marry what they are now being taught.

Actually, he says, most of us have accepted the new patterns already, "except for the consistory room."

Well, there you have it. That doesn't leave much to the imagination. Though it does leave a lot to be desired. Though the editor says that "their field of service must be more spacious than that which kept most of their mothers happy," he doesn't go on to say what that should be. One is left in the dark — though the reference to the consistory room is obvious. No, I'm not saying that all was perfect in the past. Some of our women and mothers may have been unduly restricted in the past. But what is this "new pattern" that the editor is calling for? Instead of making a strong biblical plea for mothers to remain home as long as they have children, and to consider home-making as one of the most important (if not the most important) callings today, Kuyvenhoven actually gives a good boost to his "liberated" sisters in Grand Rapids. And that coming from a *Banner* editor in 1982! When everyone can see what is happening to our homes, and as a result, our society, today. I simply cannot understand that kind of writing today in a Reformed magazine.

I would like to ask too: What are these women at Calvin being taught? Is what they are being taught the norm? Or could it possibly be completely wrong? Not a word about that either. As if it's just the most natural thing in the world that what our students are taught is good and must be implemented in society. I beg to differ! Our institutions of learning are in no way sacrosanct, and we don't necessarily have to swallow everything that comes from there.

I would like to suggest that *The Banner* editor write with a bit more discrimination hereafter. After all, he's supposed to give biblical leadership to the church. ●

Jelle Tuininga

We Can't Expect Government to do Everything

Recently the county road commission brought in some big equipment and began installing an additional storm sewer and catch-basins a little way up our street. Two days later the sudden arrival of warmer weather melting the winter snows and bringing a heavy run-off of water threatened to flood our street — an occasional occurrence in spring. The threat of street flooding prompted me to check the older catch-basins in the street beside our lot to make sure that they were open. While I was probing in the murky water with a shovel trying to locate the opening a neighbor across the way arrived and in answer to my remarks about the flooding made a few observations about the usual inefficiencies of government. Although I was inclined to agree with him regarding the frailties of government, I continued probing for the old catch-basin. Eventually

my search produced a small whirl-pool in the muddy water and a little more clearing away of some old leaves brought an increasing flow of water that, to my surprise, in another five or ten minutes had all but cleared the flooding street.

The incident recalled a story told in the *Northwest Travelguide* about Bella Coola, a remote settlement on the mountainous coast of British Columbia about half-way between Vancouver and Prince Rupert. The settlers, many of them from Scandinavia, tired of their isolation except by ship or air from the rest of the country, had long been seeking a road connection with the interior. "For decades government after government said that the link wasn't practical. In the 1930's they even spent \$35,000 on a survey to prove that a road from the valley would cost millions of dollars and be a major undertaking. Then in 1952 Bella Coola residents decided to build the road themselves. With a total population of 1,200, counting men, women, and children, they set out to build a road 10 miles up a mountain and 25 miles through a muskeg and jackpine wilderness. And, fantastic as it may sound, in little over a year they had the rough construction completed and the new link christened appropriately 'The Freedom Road'.

"In commenting on the feat, Honorable P. A. Gagliardi, Minister of Highways for B.C., said it was 'a daring undertaking, an amazing completion which has aroused the admiration of the entire Province. . . .'"

This story becomes more fascinating when we consider that remote Bella Coola was the place where Alexander MacKenzie reached the coast in 1793. Setting out from the interior beyond the mountains, he and 9 others paddled up the Peace River to become the first men to cross the continent North of Mexico. That incredible feat, a round-trip which took, as I recall, 110 days, is described in his diary published some time ago under the title *First Man West*. * This too was not a government but a fur company's project.

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PDJ

*Edited by Walter Sheppe, published by Greenwood, Brooklyn, N.Y.