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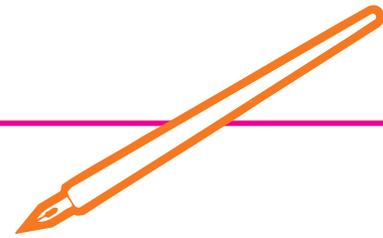
APRIL 3, 1998



*The School and the
Christian Mind*



By C. Van Dam



Having the mind of Christ

It seems to be human to crave being part of the majority and not stand out too much from the society around us. Teenagers can easily yield to the peer pressures of fashion and attitudes that the unbelieving world around them deems correct. But, the pressure to conform to the world does not let up as one gets older. Indeed, when young people cave in to worldly pressures they may often do so on the subtle or not so subtle cues of surrender to the world which they detect in the older generation.

The moulding power of this world to shape us and to pattern our attitudes and thinking is enormous in the times in which we live. We are bombarded by visual and audio stimuli from all sides. The message ranges from the blatant appeals of advertising to be greedy or sexy to the more subtle influences that pervade our secular culture in many forms, such as music and the arts – influences which suggest that we loosen up our morals. In spite of all these pressures, God's word says very clearly that as Christians we are not to give in to them.

Do not conform

"Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind" (Rom. 12:2). Now the basic reason why we are not to conform is well-known to us. We do not belong to this world of sin and depravity, but as Christians we belong to Jesus Christ who has claimed us for His service in holiness in the world in which we live. Our Lord also prepares us for the new world that is coming!

But, how are we not to conform to this world and positively to transform our thinking in a God-pleasing direction? How is that possible? After all we live in a fallen world and the struggle against sin is hard. We must, as the apostle enjoins us in the preceding verse, present ourselves as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God as our spiritual service (Rom. 12:1). Our lives must be totally God-directed. Put differently, we must live to the full that which by faith is granted to us by God, namely our being bound to Jesus Christ our Saviour by the Holy Spirit.

This being joined to Christ by the Spirit is a tremendous gift of God. It means that by God's grace those who believe in Christ have died with Christ to sin so that the old nature, sin and Satan no longer have ruling power over our lives. Indeed, because of our union with Christ, we have not only died to sin but we have also been raised with Him to a new life! As Christians share in Christ's death, they also share in Christ's resurrection to a new life (Rom. 6)! May we live in joy on that basis! Although this new obedience remains a constant struggle (Rom. 7), there is "no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:1).

What an encouraging reality for Christians living in a fallen world! Being in Christ means having the Spirit of Christ. Having the Spirit of Christ means that we have been raised to a new life, with the obligation to resist the sin of this world and that of our own sinful flesh and to live as children of God who are prepared to bear the costs of discipleship (Rom. 8:5-17). In this way the resurrection power of Christ works through the life of a Christian and the new life in Christ asserts itself.

Mind you, as is already clear from what has just been said, we cannot assume this new life or take it for granted. The promise of God for the indwelling Spirit means that we have every obligation and responsibility to see to it that the Spirit can indeed apply Christ's death and resurrection to our life. We must not quench or grieve the Spirit. The way we live and set our priorities must give room for the Spirit to work. God must always come first. That is why God's Word urges upon us that we must offer ourselves, body and mind, to God as an act of worship and gratitude (Rom. 12:1-2). Yes, also the mind must be dedicated to God and to His service alone!

Be transformed

"Be transformed by the renewing of your mind" (Rom. 12:2; cf. Eph. 4:23). As people of the resurrection, who have been raised to a new life, our mind-set must be that of the new creation. The old creation of sin has a mind of evil, sexual perversions and lusts, greed and depravity (Rom. 1). To that pattern we must no longer conform, but we must be transformed by the renewal of our mind. To renew the mind, one must be orientated to the God of life and redemption. It is His will that we strive to do. But this is not just a matter of some correct actions. Our mind, our pattern of thinking, our way of looking at life, at our occupation or profession has to be moulded by the Word and will of God.

Only when we submit our minds completely to the shaping power of the Word of God so that we can see life's purpose and goal from God's perspective so to speak, only then does the light of the Word shine clearly on our lives and we can begin to apply the Word to our particular set of problems and difficulties. Those who seek out the Scriptures for a precise word on their particular problem will often end up empty handed. God has given us the Scriptures not as a book of do's and don'ts but as His revelation of salvation. To Christians, those endowed with the Spirit of the risen Lord, our God has given the necessary discerning ability to apply His Word. When our minds have been transformed, "then," as the apostle Paul put it, "you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – His good, pleasing and perfect will" (Rom. 12:2).

It hardly needs to be said that this is a challenge. This issue of *Clarion* contains three articles that address this challenge – the challenge to let the Word impact on our life fully and completely. Ponder and think about it. Take time to absorb it. Then let's dare to be different and stand out in this world as holy, consecrated to serve the living God who renews life here and now. Let's savour that life in Christ, also as it affects the mind, as we search the Word to apply His gospel to our life in its fullness. "The fear of the Lord – that is wisdom and to shun evil is understanding" (Job 28:28). When we are shaped in our outlook and knowledge by the Spirit who helps us to understand what God has given us in Christ, then we have "the mind of Christ" (1 Cor. 2:12-16).

With such a mind-set, Christians simply don't fit the sinful mould of this age. They are shaped by the Spirit who gives life as it was meant to be enjoyed – in holy service to our Maker – a life to live in anticipation of the world to come!



What's inside?

Around this time of the year, we celebrate Easter. We rejoice in the victory which our Lord Jesus Christ won over sin, death and the devil. In chapter one of his first letter, Peter praised God for the great mercy He has shown us through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the grave. God raised His Son from the dead and glorified Him, so that our faith and hope are now in God. Peter said that the resurrection of Christ from the dead has implications for us. We are new people through faith in Christ. We are called to *live* as new people. All of this also touches the mind. We are, said Peter, to prepare our minds for action. The resurrection of Christ cannot but also affect our minds. By nature our minds are dark, depraved, hostile to God. But Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit renews our minds. He sets our minds thinking along right paths. We are made new in our minds. No longer do we conform to the ways of the world in our thinking; we are transformed by a renewal of the mind. With renewed minds, we are able to test and approve of that which is good and pleasing to God. Conversely, with renewed minds, we are able to test and reject what is offensive to our holy God.

A number of contributions in this issue deal with the mind. The editorial speaks about having the mind of Christ. Then follow three articles about the Christian mind and, respectively, church, school and family. The three articles, by Dr. N. H. Gootjes, Dr. F. G. Oosterhoff, and the Rev. R. J. Sikkema, were originally presented as speeches at a teacher's convention. We thank the authors for assenting to having them published in *Clarion*.

GvP



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By J. Ludwig

“So that we might believe . . .” (John 20:31)

*So she ran, and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple,
the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them,
“They have taken the Lord out of the tomb,
and we do not know where they have laid him” (John 20:2).*

The celebration of Easter as recorded in the gospels begins in a way completely different from what we might have desired or even expected. Women and disciples are scurrying back and forth between Jerusalem and the grave site. The opened and empty sepulcher creates consternation and bewilderment. Mary of Magdalene jumps to the conclusion that someone has stolen the body of her Lord. One group of women “flee from the tomb; for trembling and astonishment had come upon them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid” (Mk. 16:8). Others are still mourning and weeping over the loss of their loved One. Even after a report about the appearance of the Living Lamb had been circulated, few if any, really believe it.

Confusion. Tears. Unbelief. Fear. Not exactly a heart-warming welcome for the One who had conquered eternal death on their behalf! John 20 marks the beginning of Christ’s exaltation. But how little of it we actually see! His humiliation is over. He is now the Son of Man in glory, clothed in light and immortality. He has been victorious over Satan, obedient in suffering, triumphant in death. He was delivered up for our sins, and raised for our justification. He is the firstborn of the Dead! The ruler of Kings on earth. The bright Morning Star (Rev. 22:18)! Would we not have wanted the followers of Christ to break out in song and praise? To greet Him with the exuberant and adoring refrain of Psalm 24? “Lift up your heads, you arch and gate; O ancient doors, rise up and wait; Let Him come in, the King of glory!” That, at least, would have been fitting for the Saviour of the world! Yet we read nothing even remotely like this in the various accounts about the resurrection. Instead of celebration, there is lamentation. Instead of joy, there is sorrow. Instead of faith, there is

doubt. If we would read the gospel accounts, focusing exclusively on God’s people, on Mary, John, or Peter, and on their reactions, then we would come away embarrassed. “What kind of reception is this that awaits the risen Redeemer?”

The Scriptures, however, testify of Christ – also John 20. The focus is on Him, not only as the One who has overcome death, but also as the One who prepares the feast of life so that His children can partake, and as the Host who imbues in their hearts the joy of Easter. Yes, we read about a distraught Mary, but Jesus is also there. He is active, albeit behind the scenes, working to bring His church to the comforting realization that He is alive forevermore. His messianic task was not over on Golgotha. He must and He will have a people who believe in Him, for it is only in that way – the way of childlike faith – that they share in Him who is the Resurrection and the Life.

Though we may feel somewhat disappointed with the way things developed on that historic “first day of the week,” that is not what the inspired apostle John intended when he wrote this detail about Mary running to disciples with the message of a stolen body. John, also when writing about the risen Christ, is doing that under the theme, “We have beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten Son of the Father, full of grace and truth” (1:14). We have beheld. . . . We, the apostles. For three years they have been eye and ear witnesses of His glory: at the wedding feast in Cana, at Jesus’ baptism in the Jordan, on the mountain of transfiguration, at the grave side of Lazarus in Bethany, in the Garden of Gethsemane. Now these same apostles are privileged also to see His glory *after* His resurrection. These opening words of John 20 testify that they saw the living Lord with their own eyes. With their own hands they

touched the Word of Life. They are not just some delirious dreamers or gullible Galileans! They are faithful witnesses, witnesses who are drawn to the evidence by the Lord who uses as His messenger the woman from whom he had cast out seven evil spirits.

In a matter of weeks Christ will ascend to the Father. The world will no longer see Him. No one will touch Him, see Him walking, or hear Him speaking. With the time of His departure approaching, how would He make sure His Word would continue to sound forth? How would the world believe in Him throughout the ages? Through the true testimony of the apostles whom the risen Lord is forming and preparing. Our Saviour had already besought God for this in His high-priestly prayer (John 17). In that prayer He had thanked the Father that He, the Son, had been able to make known His name to His disciples: “I have given them the words which thou gavest me, and they have received them and know in truth that I came from thee.” In that same prayer, however, Christ adds, “I do not pray for these only, but also for those who believe in me *through their word*” (John 17:20).

Even before His crucifixion Christ knew this with unshakable certainty: “All those whom the Father has given me, who must yet be gathered into the fold . . . they are going to believe in me. And that will happen *through their word* – the word of my apostles.” After His resurrection we see that happening. The resurrected Lord is summoning His witnesses. He is leading Peter and John to the grave. John leaves out many other details about the women and focuses specifically on Mary Magdalene because of her role in leading himself and Peter to the grave. The writer of this gospel does not want to place himself in the foreground. All our attention must be riveted on Christ, on His person and

His work. That is why in verse two John once again humbly describes himself as "the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved."

Did Christ draw them to the garden near the cross only to convince *them* of His triumph and to gladden *their* aching hearts? No. The glorious perspective from which we must view Mary's running to the disciples is: "so that *you* may believe" (20:31).

At the grave, an angel had told Mary Magdalene and other women, "Do not be amazed; you seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen, He is not here. . . . But go tell His disciples and Peter that He is going before you to Galilee. . ." (Mk. 16:6,7). Mary Magdalene in *her* flight partially obeys the command of the angel. For she runs to Jerusalem as fast as her legs will carry her and finds Peter and John. You can see it happening before you: Mary bursts into the house (it is still early in

the morning) where these two disciples are staying. Panting and out of breath, she blurts out, "They have taken the Lord and we do not know where they have laid Him."

"But," you say, "how do you explain such a report to the disciples? The angel had told her 'Christ has risen,' yet she tells the disciples 'someone has taken the Lord out of the tomb!' How can she say this when she had heard the truth straight from the angel's mouth?" Mark, gives us the answer, when he relates that the women were "afraid;" they were beside themselves with fear; they were overwhelmed by "trembling and astonishment." In other words, they simply did not believe their eyes and ears. "Jesus alive! Impossible! We saw what they did to Him on the cross!"

How strong our unbelief is! How firmly rooted our doubt; how blind our natural heart! Yes, much more than we

even dream is possible. At the same time you see the splendour of the Son of God. He uses a sobbing, confused not-believing woman to haul Peter and John to the place of His triumph over death. By means of Mary Magdalene He rubs their noses, as it were, right in the wonderful fact of His resurrection.

Why Peter and John? Because they were two of the twelve apostles whose teaching and testimony had to form the foundation for Christ's holy catholic church. We have the prophetic Word made more sure in the writings of Peter and John. Easter obligates us to open our Bibles, to search the Scriptures, to grow in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. Let the Word dwell in you richly, for the Word is filled with the living Christ.

Rev. J. Ludwig is the minister of Pilgrim Canadian Reformed Church in London Ontario.



Arise, My Soul! Awake from Sleep

*Arise, my soul I awake from sleep !
Behold thy Saviour's grave !
His loved ones, mourning, laid him deep
In death's devouring cave:
Out from the tomb he valiant came,
And ever blessed be his name !*

*A cheering sound, an angel's voice,
Proclaimeth from on high,
Our brother Jesus, -oh, rejoice !-
Could not Death's captive lie:
But from the tomb he valiant came,
And ever blessed be his name !*

*O sacred day ! sublimest day !
O mystery unheard !
Death's hosts that claimed him as their prey
He scattered with a word:
And from the tomb he valiant came,
And ever blessed be his name !*

*O holy, holy paschal morn !
We triumphed have through thee:
Thou sweetenest Christ's torture, borne
Upon the fatal tree;
For from the tomb he valiant came;
And ever blessed be his name !*

*I boldly now defy thee, Death !
For thou hast lost thy sting;
Defy O Hell ! thy blasting breath,
All terrors thou canst bring;
For from the tomb he valiant came,
And ever blessed be his name !*

*The grave is dark the grave is cold,
And I must slumber there;
But risen, I shall Christ behold,
Christ's glories I shall share;
For from the tomb he valiant came,
And ever blessed be his name !*

*That I a welcome warm may win
From Jesus in the skies,
From the foul sepulchre of sin
May I as valiant rise
As from the tomb the Saviour came:
And ever blessed be his name !*

Translated from the Danish of Thomas Kingo
by Gilbert Tait, 1868.

The Christian Mind in the Church

By N.H. Gootjes

The three articles published in this issue were originally speeches presented at the Convention of Canadian Reformed Teachers Association in February 1996. The theme was "The Christian Mind."

The limited place of the mind

Certain quarters in the Christian world complain that the church today emphasizes emotion and neglects thinking. Such complaints protest against the idea that modern believers do not want to think but want to experience something. According to these critics, the situation of the church has become so desperate that another reformation is needed. We need a movement today not only to change how people think about God, the authority of Scripture, and salvation, but a reformation that begins by teaching people to think.

The call for reformation is so urgent because in their view, Christianity is an intellectual religion. All genuine Christian truth comes to man in a rational form. Although rationalism, which treats human reason as sovereign, is wrong, rational thought is the very essence of Christianity. The Christian must commit himself to the honest pursuit of the truth, in the spirit of the best intellectual Christian thinking of the ages, and then carefully use what he learns to serve others. To summarize this view in a few words: To be saved, human beings must think.¹

This picture of Christianity as basically an intellectual religion, must be rejected, and it is important to be clear about this prior to dealing with the Christian mind. How can it be maintained that rational thought is the essence of Christianity when Micah says: "God has shown you, O man, what is good, and what does the Lord require of you, but to do justice and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" (Micah 6:8).

God requires Israel's religion to be much more than thinking about God and His will. It should be living honestly

with one's neighbour and in close communion with God. The Lord Jesus summarized God's will for our lives in the twofold command of love:

The Lord our God, the Lord is one; and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength. The second is this: You shall love your neighbour as yourself. (Mark 12:29-31)

Christ emphasizes love, not the intellect.

The statement that Christianity is an intellectual religion betrays the influence of evangelicalism. This movement has received a strong intellectualistic character, particularly on this continent.² On the basis of Scripture, however, we have to reject the suggestion that Christianity is foremost an intellectual religion.

"The statement that Christianity is an intellectual religion betrays the influence of evangelicalism."

This does not mean, obviously, that Christianity may neglect the mind. Summarizing the law, the Lord Jesus mentioned among other things that we should love the Lord with our mind. Even in this case, however, the mind is not mentioned as the central part of our religion. Love is foremost in our relationship with God, and loving God with the mind is one aspect of this love.³

Romans 12:1,2 speaks in a similar vein. Paul begins by appealing to the congregation "to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God." With "your bodies" he clearly referred to the whole person. As an animal was sacrificed to God in the Old Testament, so the New Testament people of God must devote themselves completely to the service of God. To this belongs the "renewal of the

mind." Paul speaks here of a process of renewal that affects our consciousness and thought.⁴ This text does not say that Christianity is an intellectual religion; rather, our mind, including our intellectual powers, must be renewed to serve God.

We can be thankful that Christianity is not an intellectual religion. There are people who are not particularly intellectually gifted, but that does not mean they are unable to really serve God. What we find in Scripture is that we are completely in the service of God, with every ability we have. That applies to the mind, as well. From those to whom little is given, little is required and from those to whom much is given, much is required.

Within this context of total submission to God, we can maintain that we are called to serve God with our mind.

Two developments

We need to be aware of certain recent developments that threaten our serving God with all our mind. Two things in particular deserve our attention. In the first place, a flood of information inundates us every day. Newspapers survey the events of the day, and magazines present more background information. No one is able to read the whole paper, every day. The sheer amount of information requires one to skim the pages. Much is quickly read and instantly forgotten.

The radio broadcasts the daily headlines often in snippets of two or three lines for a topic. No time is given for something to settle in the mind, let alone to be reflected upon. Instead, the listener is dragged along to the next item. A recent poll showed that news on TV was highly appreciated but that people actually remembered few things were actually remembered. The many channels available via cable do their best to draw the public with their shows. The result is that people are surfing through all the programs in search

of the most interesting one. And when a program fails to hold the attention, another show is selected. The idea is not to gather information, let alone to consider it, but to be entertained.

Even greater possibilities are provided on the Information Highway. One can tap into news and knowledge from far away, and link into discussions with people on the other side of the globe. A virtually unlimited and unsupervised (think of child porn!) amount of information is available.

All this has led to what is sometimes labelled "information overload." People are so overwhelmed by the amount of information coming to them that they lose their grip on reality. Moreover, all this information does not leave them any time for reflection.⁵ This has consequences for our faith life. Loving God with the mind becomes impossible when we take no time to think and reflect because we have to know the latest.

The second development that threatens to undermine Christian thinking is the fact that today so much information is offered in visual form. No longer do we listen to the news, we watch it. Reading books at home is replaced more and more by watching videos. The same tendency can be observed in the classroom. There is a tendency to allow videos to take over the role of instruction by the teacher. Our time is to a large extent oriented towards the visual.

It can readily be admitted that visual presentation is in some instances the best way to provide information. A picture, and even more so a film, will confront people directly with impressive natural phenomena such as Niagara Falls. A good photograph of the Tower in London will result in a clearer impression in the mind than any description can achieve. Moreover, the direct impact of visual information is great, and it has a direct appeal to the emotions.

On the other hand, visual presentations are greatly limited. One needs to go beyond what is seen to come to a deeper understanding. We need information about the forces that contributed to the making of Niagara Falls, and the story of what happened at the famous Tower. That leads to a more comprehensive appreciation of what is seen.

But man is more than a being in need of being entertained or shocked. People also have to think, to reflect, to internalize. Today's ongoing flow of visual information does not stimulate thinking. It has to grab and hold the at-



tention and therefore has to come quickly with yet another arresting view or tense event. It cannot afford to give people time for reflection, for a static view is boring. Moreover, many things cannot be shown or made visible. Thoughts and motives are by nature invisible but play a tremendous role in our world. The present emphasis on the visual is not conducive to developing the mind in the service of God.

"Loving God with the mind becomes impossible when we take no time to think and reflect because we have to know the latest."

Two examples

How do these two developments impact on the church and its teaching? To give an example: How can we explain the doctrine of the Trinity today? A well-known theologian has said that the church has to take into account that we live in a visual age, and that the people have a short attention span. The following "sermon in two points" was recommended as fitting for our time.⁶ First, three chairs are placed on a platform facing each other. The minister moves from one chair to another, representing the roles and perspectives of each of the Persons of God in the atoning work of Jesus Christ. It appears that at this point

the emphasis is on the "Three Persons." In the second part of the message (after a musical interlude, for the sermon should not be too long!) three men appear, together wearing one large white robe. Their heads protrude through three openings in the robe. At this point "One God" is represented, discussing the work of Christ.

In this example, the need to make the Trinity understandable led to the choice for a visual representation. The attempt, however, trivializes God. Particularly the scene where three heads emerge from one robe is a ridiculous way of presenting God.⁷ It is true that the people in the pew no longer need to think, they can see with their own eyes how God exists. They are, however, misled, for God is not like three heads on one body. He is one God, and at the same time three Persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. No visual representation of this Trinity is possible, either "one God" is denied, or Father, Son and Spirit are not really Persons.

What cannot be represented in an image, however, can be expressed in words. Scripture has been studied to see how God reveals himself. It has taken centuries of thought to find suitable formulations. The church has come up with the useful expressions: One Being, Three Persons. Moreover, one of the important early Creeds, the Athanasian Creed, deals particularly with this. It attempts to make clear to our minds how

to speak about the Trinity, and we need to train ourselves in this language. To be sure, even after all these centuries we still cannot understand how God can be One God, and at the same time Three Persons, let alone that we can visualize Him. After having carefully listened to His word, however, we can know how God presents himself to us. We have learned how to express this, and we can use this when we approach Him in prayer. Rather than being misled by a visual representation we should learn from a well-considered teaching.

The same limitation of the visual approach can be demonstrated for the suffering of Jesus Christ on the cross. The crucifixion has often been portrayed; moreover, in contrast to the Trinity it was, obviously, a visible fact. But how helpful can pictures be? They can show the outside, the nails and the thorns, but not the internal physical suffering. Even for understanding the physical suffering we need a description of what happens to a crucified body.⁸

Even so we have not touched the real depth of Christ's suffering on the cross. At that time, many people died on a cross, physically they suffered the same as our Lord did. The essential aspect of Jesus' crucifixion is that He suffered there the curse of God to the fullest extent. It was His life to be with God, but there He was rejected by God and subjected to the complete hatred of God, as He expressed it in His cry: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" This cannot be painted. We can only imperfectly understand this when we think of ourselves being rejected and cursed by those whom we love most. But it was even worse for our Lord Jesus Christ, for He was sinless and wanted to live in full communion with God. We need emotion and understanding to gain some insight into the suffering of Christ on the cross. To sum it up, we need more than a good picture, we need a good sermon.

An old teaching of the Heidelberg Catechism becomes relevant in a new context.

But may images not be tolerated in the churches as "books for the laity?"

No, for we should not be wiser than God. He wants His people to be taught, not by means of dumb images but by the living *preaching of His Word*. (Lord's Day 35)

Originally, this question and answer was directed against pictures and statues which had adorned the church buildings for hundreds of years prior to

the Reformation. Now, it should also be applied to dramatic presentations of the gospel.

The apostle Paul assigned a vital role to preaching when he wrote: "So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes by the preaching of Christ" (Rom. 10:17). In our own time, the possibilities of visual information have increased dramatically but people still need to be trained to think through what God's revelation means and requires. The preaching should stimulate them in this.

The task of the church

The church cannot neglect to make people think. This is expressed in the Heidelberg Catechism. Church people have to know how great their sins and misery are, how they are delivered from all their sins and misery, and how they are to be thankful to God for such deliverance. They have to know this in order to live and die in the comfort of faith (Lord's Day 1). Faith is knowledge and confidence together (Lord's Day 7). Knowledge is an integral aspect of faith.

The church is, therefore, heavily involved in instruction, in the training of the Christian mind. In the sermon and in catechetical instruction, but also in the study societies, God's people have to learn to use their minds to grasp the riches of God's revelation, each according to his ability. The people need to think in church. It would be a bad day, however, when thinking was merely required in church. There should be a unity between family, church and school.

The school should not just strive to teach the students a number of skills needed to find a suitable job. The students should also learn to think, to sift through the flood of information and to form a Christian opinion. The home should not be dominated by TV shows and videos for entertainment. Parents should take time to discuss issues with their children to help them serve the Lord, so that they will not thoughtlessly follow the ways of the world. The preaching and teaching that has been entrusted to the church, can flourish in that climate.

¹These two paragraphs contain statements taken from John H. Armstrong's article "The Christian Mind", *The Outlook*, (November 1995), pp. 12-14. It must be added that Armstrong is sometimes less one sided, e.g. when he states that God has made us both thinking and feeling individuals.



CHURCH NEWS

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²The name "evangelicals" was used at various times and in various nations, and not always with the same meaning. A. McGrath makes the meaning very wide when he calls everyone evangelical who agrees to six basic tenets, *Evangelicals and the Future of Christianity* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1993) pp. 49ff. See for the intellectual character of American evangelicalism, e.g. G.M. Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991) pp. 122-134, and M. Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994) pp. 96ff; pp. 126ff.
³Jesus' summary of the law in Mark 12 goes back to God's own summary in Deut. 6:5. This Old Testament passage does not mention the mind explicitly, it refers to love with heart, soul and might. The heart may refer to the emotion, the soul to intellect and will, see B. Holwerda, *Deuteronomium* (Published lecture notes; Kampen: Van den Berg, n.d.) p. 156. The Greek translation of the Old Testament gives a free rendering of this verse, and it is used freely in several New Testament passages, see the survey in G. Wohlenberg, *Das Evangelium des Markus* (Leipzig: A. Deichert, 1910) p. 319, footnote 2.

⁴See, e.g. the commentary of J. Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968) II, 114. The "mind" is more than the intellect.

⁵See E. Schuurman, "De Mythe van de Digitale Snelweg en Virtual Reality", in *Beweging* (September 1995) pp. 76-79.

⁶The following example has been taken from M.J. Erickson, *God is Three Persons: A Contemporary Interpretation of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995) pp. 343f.

⁷Actually, a similar image had been used by the 16th century heretic Servetus to attack the doctrine of the Trinity. He likened the trinitarian God to the three headed Cerberus, the mythological dog guarding the entrance of hell.

⁸Bible Dictionaries will be helpful here. An interesting article on crucifixion from a medical perspective appeared in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* 255, no. 11 (March 21, 1986). I owe this reference to Prof. J. Geertsema.



The School and the Christian Mind

By F.G. Oosterhoff

Feeling, spontaneity, and experience are in among Christians, and the use of the mind is out. That is the complaint of an increasing number of Christian authors. They admit that emotion plays a legitimate role in religion, and in life in general, but they do not want *feeling* to crowd out *thought*. The neglect of the mind, they warn us, and the failure to develop a specifically *Christian* mind, inevitably lead to the secularization of the church.

The organizers of tonight's meeting have taken these warnings to heart and instructed the three of us to address the issue. Specifically, they have asked us to deal with the need to develop a Christian mind, that is a Christian manner of thinking, in our young people. We were asked to look at the responsibilities of the school, the church, and the home in this regard. My task is to deal with the school. I have divided my presentation into two parts and will begin by summarizing them.

(1) Anti-intellectualism may be a problem in the church, but the trend is not confined to Christians. It is part of the general world-view in our post-modern world and is encouraged by the media, the entertainment industry, and indeed by practically all the powers that mould public opinion. These powers include the people who decide on educational policy, and the first part of my presentation is devoted to that topic. Having established that our educational planners tend to give short shrift to the things of the mind, we will look at the reasons why this is so.

(2) In the second place, we will consider how the Christian school should respond to the attack upon thinking in general, and upon Christian thinking in particular.

Ministry policy

Content and process

In order to think as a Christian, one has to be able to think. Teaching young

people to do just that was traditionally one of the main functions of the school. I am afraid that it no longer is. Increasingly in recent decades, educational theory discouraged the development of independent thinking. One of the means employed for that purpose is the subordination of content to process. Let me briefly define these two terms. By content I mean academic content or curriculum: the study of languages and literature, history and geography, mathematics and science, and so on. In brief, it is the stuff that, if properly taught, furnishes the mind and enriches it, intellectually, morally, and emotionally. It is also the stuff that allows students to hone their thinking skills in a serious manner. This academic content, then, receives increasingly less emphasis in Ministry policy, while process takes over.

The term process can mean two rather different things. Firstly, it refers to learning skills, teaching methodology, and so on. This type of process is a necessary part of the school's business, and we have no quarrel with it, provided it does not squeeze out content. The problem lies with the second type of process. That one has little if anything to do with the school's traditional function. Rather than facilitating the teaching of content, it interferes with it. This second type of process includes the teaching of life and social skills. Much attention is also given to the inculcation of politically correct attitudes with respect to radical feminism, so-called "alternative lifestyles," and similar matters. In addition, quite a bit of emphasis has, in the past, been placed on the need that students learn to question authority and work for the radical transformation of society.

Socializing the masses

That goal of transforming society has not been abandoned. I have the impression, however, that it no longer receives the same emphasis as it used to. The rea-

son, I think, is not only parental protest, although that has played a role. But there is also the fact that we live in the 1990s, a decade that provides us with serious economic and social challenges. In the economic field we are faced with global competition, high unemployment, and an uncertain job market. Socially the situation is also volatile, and that partly because of the changing economic situation. Unemployment is high among young people, minority groups, and the less well trained. This leads to social discontent, crime, and strife among groups and regions.

It is this type of problems, I believe, that play an increasingly important role in educational policies. These policies have two goals. Firstly, they are to ensure that all students are socially well adapted, feel that they can succeed in school, and therefore don't drop out. This the ministry hopes to accomplish by such policies as the downgrading of curriculum so that all students can master it, by a heavy stress on process, and by destreaming – that is, by placing all students in the same group, rather than dividing them according to ability. Equality is emphasized. Indeed, there is a constant stress on the doctrine that there must be equality of opportunity not only, but also equality of outcome. Everybody must have a chance to do as well as the next one. Once the school has managed to enforce this equality, the reasoning appears to be, everybody will be successful in the workplace.

Outcome-based education

Of course, enforced equality will not by itself make our workers more competitive and eliminate the spectre of unemployment. Educational planners know that. Attempting to deal more effectively with not only the social but also the economic challenges, they have lately been giving quite a bit of attention to a new approach to schooling known as Outcome-Based Education (OBE). This is the invention

of an American sociologist by the name of William Spady and aims at the production of well-socialized consumers and well-trained, adaptable producers. Traditional curriculum plays only a secondary role in this system, and evaluation is not based on the students' acquisition of specific skills and content, but on their having mastered what Spady calls Complex Life Performance Roles. These outcomes have to do with the students' ability to perform well in the society and market place of the future. And they are sufficiently general that teachers will be able to pass everyone, even if some students may have to spend more time in school than others.

Spady insists that if his system is followed, then everyone, no matter what his or her native ability, can reach the goal. And once they have done that at school, students will be able to take on the world. They will be prepared for the challenges of our post-industrial and ever-changing economy. Indeed, some of Spady's disciples assure us that the result will be a social paradise. Once the system is in place, we may expect the end of unemployment, poverty, illiteracy, and crime.

An explanation

Ministries of Education are interested in such experiments like OBE in part, I fear, for ideological reasons. The "progressive" element has long been prominent among educational planners, and that element has traditionally attempted to enforce equality not just of opportunity, which is a most laudable goal, but also of result, which is a utopian one. But it is only fair to add that, as we already noticed, practical considerations play a role as well, and that these are weighty ones. Traditionally only the more academically inclined student attended secondary school. In today's economy every worker, if he or she wants to find and hang on to a job, has to have at least a high school diploma. And the schools have no choice but to accept and accommodate every applicant. In short, when criticizing the Ministry's policy we have to keep in mind that it is working under real restraints and that there are no easy answers to today's educational problems.

This realization does not have to prevent us, however, from questioning the *means* educational planners use in dealing with the problems. It is my contention, firstly, that these means are ill-

chosen and will not lead to the predicted result; and secondly, that even if they did so, the cure would be far worse than the disease.

Brave New World?

Indeed, I am afraid that they will have disastrous results. When reading up on these issues I couldn't help thinking of the scenario that Aldous Huxley painted in his novel *Brave New World*. You probably know the story. It is about a society that practises selective breeding and in-vitro fertilization. The planners manipulate every individual from conception onward, and so ensure that all will execute the role assigned to them effectively, happily, and without questioning. All are equally well-adjusted and equally contented, no matter what their ability or socio-economic role. And if discontent does threaten, the problem is solved by the wonder-drug soma, a combination of tranquilizer and happiness pill.

"Never has there been a generation which was so exposed to 'the spiritual forces of evil!'"

Huxley wrote his book in 1932 and thought that the situation he portrayed would not come to pass until some centuries hence. He was too optimistic. Barely 60 years later all the technology needed to realize the Huxleyan nightmare exists already. More ominously, a Huxleyan type of social engineering is, as we have seen, beginning to make a lot of sense to some of our social planners. No, I am not suggesting that the people at the Ministry of Education consciously want to dehumanize our students. Far from it. They are well-intentioned: all they want is to ensure that these students become well-adjusted, successful, and governable citizens. But they don't seem to realize that such expertly socialized citizens will be little more than robots; that they will become, as one author put it, "fodder of the service economy" (Martin Levin in the *Globe and Mail*, Dec. 7, 1995). And that is uncomfortably close to the fate suffered by the inhabitants of Huxley's brave new world.

Developing the mind

The importance of curriculum

So what are we to do? We must make sure of three things. The first one

is that our schools continue to be parental ones: in the final analysis it is the parents who decide on the type of education their children will receive. In the second place, our schools must continue to be *Christian* schools, not just in name but also in fact. That means that the Scriptures illuminate whatever we teach; that they are a light on our path, also our intellectual path. And in the third place, our schools must make sure that curriculum, particularly the transmission of knowledge, is and always remains a primary concern. This third point is the one that I want to concentrate on.

Why is curriculum of such great importance? For two reasons. Firstly, it allows us to know about God's work in nature and history: that is, His work of creation, providence, and government. And secondly, it acquaints us with thousands of years of human experience and achievement, an inheritance from which we may learn and on which we may build. The aspect of building, incidentally, is important. The transmission of knowledge does not imply (as some people seem to think) a reactionary adherence to customs and practices of the past, or a static view with respect to scientific and other knowledge. Rather, acquaintance with perennial values and past accomplishments is a *precondition* both for the establishment of practices suitable to our times, and for the advance of knowledge in general. We don't have to reinvent the wheel and should not attempt to do so. We should, at least at the primary and secondary levels, teach and study curriculum instead.

Now you may want to object that teaching curriculum, particularly as it refers to human achievements, can be a risky business. After all, much human wisdom is, as the apostle Paul calls it, "wisdom of this world," which means that it ignores and opposes the wisdom of God. It is also true that the most savage attacks upon Christianity have been and still are being waged in the name of human reason. And there is no question about it: our students will encounter the results of antichristian reasoning in practically every subject they study.

They will also encounter them, however, if they do not study curriculum content, for anti-christian ideas reach them via other sources: via radio and TV, book and magazine, video and Internet. I am not exaggerating when I say that never has there been a generation which was so exposed to "the spiritual

forces of evil," to use the expression of Ephesians 6, as the present one. Because of the universality of education and the great advances in communication technology, information reaches people from all sides. "Plain men," C.S. Lewis once wrote, "are forced to bear burdens which plain men were never expected to bear before." Which means, he added, that they must struggle so much the harder to find the truth.

To arm our students for this struggle is a primary task of the Christian school. And in order to fulfil that task it must teach curriculum content. It must do so in order to *acquaint* students with the ideas that assault them, and in order to teach them *how to deal* with these ideas. I chose the verb "acquaint" on purpose, for an important teaching strategy – increasingly so in the higher grades – is guided confrontation. There must be confrontation. In order to discern the spirits, students must know what these spirits are and how they came about, and in order to analyze ideas, they must find out what these ideas entail. And they learn about these spirits and these ideas, and about their origins, through curriculum content. There must not be confrontation, however, without guidance. Students can't be left to do the discerning and testing and analyzing on their own. They need the help of their teachers. No less importantly, they need the very curriculum content that acquainted them with the ideas and their origins in the first place.

In the time that remains I will try to prove this last point by providing some illustrations of the role which curriculum content can and should play in this aspect of Christian education. In other words, I will try to show how it can and should contribute to the development of a Christian mind in our students.

Curriculum and the Christian mind

Teaching curriculum content means, as we have noted, transmission of knowledge. And transmission of knowledge, in turn, implies a historical approach to the subjects we teach. It also implies the importance of history as a separate discipline. Much could be said about the ways in which the teaching of history can help us in arming our students, but only a few points can be mentioned. One is that the past speaks of mankind's wisdom and folly, of obedience to God's Word and of disobedience, and of the consequences of these attitudes. The study of history therefore

teaches students, directly and indirectly, how to act and what to avoid.

It also enables students to analyze the *ideas* that govern our times, for modern ideas have their roots in the past. Old heresies don't die; they simply hibernate and reappear in season. By studying past developments students can learn why and how ideas arise and what they lead to. And that applies not only to religious ideas but to all manner of theories, including scientific ones.

Furthermore, history acquaints us with human schemes that have gone awry, and therefore helps us relativize the exaggerated claims of modern thought. It teaches us, as Blaise Pascal put it more than three centuries ago, that "Reason's last step is the recognition that there is an infinite number of things which are beyond reason. . . ."

***"Our earthly existence is brief,
and it serves as a training
ground, a preparation for the
world to come."***

In brief, the benefit of the study of the past is its capacity to enlarge our experience and to teach us wisdom. And what applies to historical studies applies to other subjects, such as literature. I already provided one example, Huxley's *Brave New World*. That brief novel has warned untold numbers of the dangers of turning human beings into mindless producers and consumers, programmed by a planning elite with the help of an increasingly clever technology. And the warning issued by Huxley's book is only one example of the benefits of the study of literature. There are many more, and they apply to all grade levels.

To take away curriculum content, therefore, is to rob students of an inheritance to which they are entitled and which they cannot do without. It is also to deny them the opportunity of developing their thinking skills. For thinking cannot be done in a vacuum. Human reason, one of God's most precious gifts to man, is a tool and needs something to work on, and much of what it does work on is curriculum content.

In brief: academic subjects provide us with material that allows us to discern the spirits, to "escape the tyranny of the present" (Cicero), and to think independently. And all these benefits run counter to the effects of the type of schooling planned by today's educational leaders, for that is a schooling

which will provide future citizens with ready-made, homogenized attitudes. These planners, whether they realize it or not, ignore the citizens' own responsibility. They make possible a situation where Big Brother is in control as the one who knows best. And Big Brother, I assure you, is by definition totalitarian and antichristian.

* * *

Of course, Christian thinking is not concerned with intellectual issues only. I have stressed that aspect because I had to deal with education, but I do not want to leave you with the idea that I have exhausted the topic. Much more is at issue in the development of the Christian mind. Ultimately, Christian thinking is covenantal thinking, which means that it takes seriously God's claim upon all of our life. It therefore also has to do with the Christians' choice of entertainment, their use of leisure, their use of technology; indeed their attitude to life as a whole. As one author put it (Harry Blamires, in *The Christian Mind*), it implies that we see the things of this world under the aspect of eternity.

It is good to keep that warning in mind. We live in a secular, materialistic society with many opportunities, and this does not fail to affect us. We run the danger of forgetting what our forebears knew so well, namely that our earthly existence is brief, and that it serves as a training ground, a preparation for the world to come. Christian thinking implies the realization that there is no profit, only irreparable loss, if we gain the world at the cost of forfeiting our soul. To teach that, and to model it, is an essential duty of Christian educators.

Some references:

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The Christian Mind and the Family

By R.J. Sikkema

Any discussion about *The Christian Mind* needs to focus on the role of the media in the lives of Christian young people. This demands that we examine the role of TV and the place of the music our youth listen to – the music which motivates and directs their behavior much more than we may care to acknowledge.

Make every thought captive to Christ

It needs no defense that the Scriptures demand that we bring “every thought captive to obey Christ” (2 Cor. 10:5); that we must be “transformed by the renewal of our mind” (Rom. 12:2); that we are to have “the mind of Christ” (1 Cor. 2:16); that we are to keep our hearts and our minds in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4:7). Neither does it require a defense that such things do not come of or by themselves. We are to train ourselves in godliness. We are to study and work at developing a Christian mind, a Christian understanding of life and the issues of life. And we do well to remember that the Scriptures admonish us – “as a man thinks in his heart, so he is” (Pr. 23:7 RSV).

But thinking is not really “where it’s at” today. Dr. James Boice once said: “We live in mindless times, days in which millions of people are drifting along through life, manipulated by the mass media, particularly television, *hardly knowing it.*” Did you hear that? People are being *manipulated* by the mass media, as they drift along through life mindlessly – *but they hardly know it!*

Listen to Dr. Malcolm Muggeridge, editor and author, a man well acquainted with the media. He begins his first lecture in *Christ and the Media* as follows:

It is a truism to say that the media in general, and TV in particular, and BBC television especially, are incomparably the greatest single influence in our society today, exerted

at all social, economic and cultural levels. This influence, I should add, is, in my opinion, largely exerted irresponsibly, arbitrarily, and without reference to any moral or intellectual, still less spiritual, guidelines whatsoever. Furthermore, if it is the case, as I believe, that what we still call Western civilization is fast disintegrating, then the media are playing a major role in the process by carrying out, albeit for the most part unconsciously, a mighty brainwashing operation, whereby all traditional standards and values are being denigrated to the point of disappearing, leaving a moral vacuum in which the very concepts of Good and Evil have ceased to have any validity. Like a building site, which has been cleared, but with nothing erected on it: just a great, empty space, where rubbish is thrown, where children play and quarrel and fight, and layabouts sleep, and the rain collects in puddles. Future historians will surely see us as having created in the media a Frankenstein monster which no one knows how to control or direct, and marvel that we should have so meekly subjected ourselves to its destructive and often malign influence. More particularly as, in the case of the BBC, it is financed out of the public purse. Nor do I see within the various broadcasting agencies any force, actual or potential, capable of delivering us from being totally submerged in the world of fantasy the channels they control project.²

The Christian mind is that discipline where we learn to reflect critically upon the questions, the issues of life. It comes from our commitment to do so from a conscious awareness of a perspective on life that we have struggled to make our own, having studied the Word of the Lord. It focuses on the Word’s

meaning in daily living and on its claim upon the obedient surrender of our total being to the Lord of life. The problem we face today is this: our ability to think, and a recognition of the importance and desirability of knowing *how* to think, is being undermined. This has the disastrous consequence that even the *idea* of such a thing as “a distinctly *Christian* mind” now seems not only to be an illusion, but a “notion” not worthy of our attention or concern.³ The *Christian* mind certainly seems not to play a role when it comes to our entertainment. Who cares about nurturing a Christian mind today, when as a matter of fact the very idea of nurturing a mind is blasé? There are exceptions, but we need to be aware of the anti-mind, anti-thinking phenomena. And we need to fight against it consciously.

“The Christian mind is that discipline where we learn to reflect critically upon the questions, the issues of life.”

Modern media

Both television and modern music have played a major role in this. I have already referred you to the “mighty brainwashing operation” which the media, according to Malcolm Muggeridge, is “for the most part unconsciously” carrying out. Mr. Neil Postman has given us an amazingly insightful book, *Amusing Ourselves To Death*. His book has, very correctly, been characterized as “A scathing secular rebuke to the mindlessness of many of the pursuits that consume most of our generation.” Mr. Postman writes:

(But) what I am claiming here is not that television is entertaining but that it has made entertainment itself the *natural format for the representation of all experience*. Our television set keeps us in constant communion

with the world, but it does so with a face whose smiling countenance is unalterable. The problem is not that television presents us with entertaining subject matter, but that all subject matter is presented as entertaining, which is another issue altogether. To say it still another way: Entertainment is the supra-ideology of all discourse on television. No matter what is depicted or from what point of view, the overarching presumption is that it is there for our amusement and pleasure.⁴

To illustrate his point, Postman analyses what television did in the eighty minute "discussion" following the showing of the controversial atomic war movie, *The Day After*. This is Postman's summary of what happened:

[There] was no discussion as we normally use the word. Even when the "discussion" period began, there were no arguments or counter-arguments, no scrutiny of assumptions, no explanations, no elaborations, no definitions.

And why not? Postman explains:

When a television show is in progress, it is very nearly impermissible to say, "Let me think about that" or "I don't know" or "What do you mean when you say . . . ?" or "From what sources does your information come?" This type of discourse not only slows down the tempo of the show but creates the impression of uncertainty or lack of finish. It tends to reveal people in the *act of thinking*, which is as disconcerting and boring on television as it is on a Las Vegas stage. Thinking does not play well on television, a fact that television directors discovered long ago. There is not much to see in it. It is, in a phrase, not a performing art. But television demands a performing art, and so what the ABC network gave us was a picture of men of sophisticated verbal skills and political understanding being brought to heel by a medium that requires them to fashion performances rather than ideas.⁵

Rock and Roll and romanticism

If it is true that television is a medium which erodes and undermines even our awareness that we must think about and reflect on – yes, argue and debate! – the issues of life, so that we may conduct ourselves as obedient children, and not be "tossed about by every wind of doctrine," then it is surely



also true that it is today's "counter culture" music, which not only is destroying all desire to think, but which also advocates and glories in acting on gut impulses. "If it feels good, do it."

***"Who cares about nurturing
the Christian mind
today, when as a matter of fact
the very idea of nurturing a
mind is blasé?"***

This modern phenomena must not be confused with romanticism. Romanticism is a philosophic idealism which proposed that ultimate truth is the truth of what it is you feel, what you experience deep within your soul. Romanticism said: The path to true knowledge lies along the path of the emotional and the intuitive. It stressed the necessity for fullness of experience and depth of feeling as the pathway to understanding reality. Reason, to the romanticist, is artificial and analytical. Thus thinking and "the mind" are inadequate pathways to understanding life and reality.

The Romanticist, however, did not despise or disavow the importance of

thinking reflectively about what it is one claims "to know" by way of feeling and intuition. The Romanticist did not say, "It is not important to learn to think critically about life and reality." He would, however, caution that the root and fountain of truth does not lie in that which reason can uncover or explain. Rather, truth is discovered, according to the Romanticist, in what the spirit of man feels and intuits as truth. Only that deserves to be called knowledge.

Romanticism, as a movement in the arts, asserts the primacy of feeling, imagination and sentiment, as opposed to reason and thought. Romanticism commands the artist to feel freely and deeply, and to express what he has felt with no restraints, either artistic or social. Rock and Roll "artists" and advocates, on the other hand, heartily endorse a "no restraints" ideal. No Romantic poets (Lord Byron for example) despised thought or discouraged thinking. If they had, they could not have written their poetry which demand careful thought and reflection by the reader.

Don't think!

However, this is not what the advocates of "if it feels good, do it!" are

promoting. It is not what Rock and Roll in its many and varied expressions – hard rock, punk rock, heavy metal, rap, etc. – is all about. This genre of music doesn't want its listener to think. It wants instead that the listener act on impulse – regardless of what it is – regardless of how sick or violent or corrupt, or demonic that impulse may be.

Put together – a medium, TV, which undermines the ability to think, and a genre of music, Rock and Roll, which advocates the foolishness of knowing how to think – these become a very devastating and frightening phenomenon. People who are captivated by and fall prey to it become like the "irrational animals, (the) creatures of instinct" of whom Peter speaks. "They count it a pleasure to revel in the daytime," says Peter of such people. "They are blots and blemishes, reveling in their dissipation, carousing with you. They have eyes full of adultery, insatiable for sin. They entice unsteady souls. They have hearts trained in greed. Accursed children. Forsaking the right way, they have gone astray. . . ." (2 Peter 2:13-15). And Jude says: "These men revile whatever they do not understand, and by those things that they know by instinct as irrational animals do, they are destroyed" (Jude 10).

But they don't know that anymore; they don't see it anymore. Once a person believes that thinking is not "where it's at," once a person believes that nurturing a mind which is rooted in the sure Word of the Lord, and that being able to give a reasoned analysis of, and response to, the spirits of the age is utter foolishness, once a person believes that the feeling of the moment is all that matters, he will become a drifter. He will no longer be able to stand. He will float along with every wind of doctrine. He will be easy prey for the father of lies, the devil.

Reason for alarm

If it is true that TV is killing our ability to think, and if it is true that the Rock and Roll music scene promotes the lie in all of its deceptive forms then there is reason for concern, nay for alarm! I believe that many of our youth are idly dancing to the music of our age. They fill their souls with it from morning till eve. And I'm afraid that neither they, nor we, their parents and teachers, who are called to nurture them in the fear of the Lord, are aware of the seriousness of the problem (or of its roots) because we are all, more or less, caught in the same boat.

At this point I want to focus on some specifics of what it is Rock and Roll music offers, in order that you may get some appreciation of the fact that here we are entering a field of battle. It has been well said: "Spiritual warfare is raging in the world, and music is one of its battlefields."⁶ The purveyors of Rock and Roll themselves declare: "Rock and Roll is royal warfare . . . the universe is our battleground . . . the goal (is) the freedom to possess the key of the fifth battalion and release the fierce and stampeding angels of Abaddon (hell)."⁷ And John Lennon vaingloriously declared: "Christianity will vanish, will shrink and die. We are more popular than Jesus."

"We must bring every thought captive to obey Christ."

I had hoped to shock you tonight into an awareness of what groups such as Kiss, Prince, Twisted Sister, Motley Crew, Scorpion, Black Sabbath, Green Day, Ozzy Osborne, Crash Test Dummies (the list goes on and on) portray. We need to know what it is they are offering: explicit sex, homosexual love, rape, incest, suicide, death, hell, sado-masochism, transvestitism, drug trips, Satan worship, and an utter hatred of the Lord our God. I wanted you to see their twisting, gyrating bodies; I wanted you to see their contorted faces, their eyes that speak of being possessed; I wanted you to hear for yourself that much of this music is utterly corrupt. That it encourages gross immorality and antisocial behavior, and that it is filled with hatred, corruption and blasphemy.

[Here Rev. Sikkema read a sampling of lyrics that celebrated the gross, the demonic, and the most ungodly, anti-godly mindset. There is no need to reproduce these lyrics in Clarion. – Editor]

The refreshment of the human spirit

You understand, I could go on and on – quoting lyrics that are born of a defiance of and a revolution against the Lord and His anointed – which characterizes so much of the music of our age. But I must close. I recognize that I haven't really said all that much by way of specific proposals on the question: How can parents and teachers train their children and students to engage in truly Christian, God pleasing activity when it comes to questions of TV and music? I chose instead to focus on

exposing that which captivates our youth also. I did that, however, against the background of this central thought: "We must bring every thought captive to obey Christ." J. S. Bach understood this to mean that "the end of all music should be the glory of God and the refreshment of the human spirit." And so it should be for us also. Then you may indeed sing of the beauty of God's creation, and of the wonder of His love – a love you may also experience and express in your life's relationships as they were ordained to be by the Lord. And that is blessedness.

Ravi Zacharias begins the first chapter of his book, *Can Man Live Without God*:

"Give me the making of the songs of a nation," said eighteenth-century Scottish political thinker Andrew Fletcher, "and I care not who writes its laws." His confident words not only divulge a major cultural access point to our contemporary mind-set, but also acknowledge the extraordinary control of song lyrics upon the moods and convictions of the young, who are embattled by the tug of so many allurements.⁸

Mr. Fletcher wrote this before the advent of TV. We might say today, "Give me the making of the songs of a culture and of the content of the sit-coms and soap operas of a nation and I care not who rules the land."

I close with the prayer that these comments will encourage you to commit yourself consciously to nurture your mind, as well as the minds of your children and students, in the fear of the Lord. That is the beginning of wisdom! Study and learn the art of living your life for and unto Christ, to whom be praise and glory, now and forever.

Rev. R. Sikkema is minister of Rehoboth United Reformed Church, Hamilton, Ontario.

¹Attributed to James M. Boice in the Nov. 1995 *Outlook*, p. 12, "The Christian Mind" by John H. Armstrong.

²Malcolm Muggeridge, *Christ and the Media*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), pp. 23-24.

³See Harry Blamires, *The Christian Mind* (London: SPCK, 1966).

⁴Neil Postman, *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, (New York: Penguin Books, 1985), p.87.

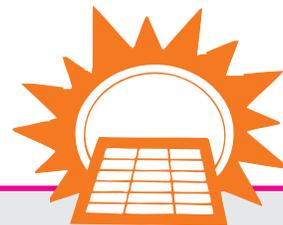
⁵*Ibid*, pp. 90-91.

⁶Ken Heffner, *The Banner*, (Oct. 16, 1995).

⁷Hell's Bell's part 4.

⁸Ravi Zacharias, *Can Man Live Without God*, (Dallas: Word, 1994). p. 3.





By Mrs. R. Ravensbergen

*“ . . . For with the LORD there is steadfast love, and with Him is plenteous redemption. And He will redeem Israel from all his iniquities.”
Psalm 130:7b, 8*

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Sometimes, when we are bothered by the things that happen to us, or around us, we become depressed. Everything seems dark around us, and we hardly know how to go on with our lives. We feel bad about things we did, or maybe we are sick or jobless or lonely. Everything seems so difficult, and it seems that there is nobody who really cares about us or understands what our problem is. Maybe we even think that the Lord has deserted us. For with all the sins that we commit every day we think that the Lord would not want to be near us anymore.

When we come to such a dark stage in our lives, we are not alone. That happens to more people. The author of Psalm 130 suffered from it. He starts the psalm with the words, “Out of the depths I cry to thee, O LORD!” He feels as if he were in a deep pit of darkness, with no way out. And then . . . he cries to the Lord!

He cries to the Lord, and he knows that the Lord will hear him. For he goes on to explain that the Lord does not look at our sins.

Why? We are conceived and born in sin, and every day we sin. Does the Lord not become angry with us, and punish us? He did that to the Israelites in the O.T. He sent enemies to punish them, and He sent plagues and diseases, and He even led them out of their country into captivity. All because the Israelites did not obey the Lord, but served other gods. So if the Lord punished the Israelites, will He not punish us as well? We are not any better than the Israelites!

The Lord punished, but He did not desert His people. He made them aware of their sins, so that they could come back to Him. For He is also a merciful Father. What did He do? He sent His Son to the earth as He had promised already to Adam and Eve after the fall into sin. Because His Son was willing to take all the sins of the people upon Himself and to give up His life for them, that is why God, the Father, is able to forgive us all our sins. Because of His love for us, there is redemption. And He will forgive all our iniquities. That certainty of the Lord being willing to forgive us all our sins has to stay with us at all times. Even when we go through a dark time. For the Lord may give us very difficult times. His Church has gone through times of oppression and persecution. His people may have to endure terrible diseases, or periods where we seem totally absorbed in a life without the Lord. There is so much suffering and grief and loneliness. At times like that we may also come to a point that we think that our sins never can be forgiven anymore. Why would the Lord still care about us, sinful people?

And do we see what the author of this psalm does in that situation? He cries out to the Lord. Not because he finds himself good enough for that, but because he knows that the Lord is merciful. He knows that the Lord will hear him. That is the example that we all can follow. For the Lord will hear us, too.

This month we celebrate Good Friday and Easter. We will particularly remember that the Lord Jesus Christ died for all our sins. He died, so that we may live. He rose from the dead,

so we do not have to fear death anymore. He returned to His Father in heaven, so that we also may go to Him.

That does not mean that our Father will not give us any difficulties to endure anymore. Our diseases are not yet cured. On this earth there will still be grief and loneliness and handicaps, also for God’s children. But as long as we put our trust in the Lord, the world will never be pitch dark for us. For all those who belong to the Lord are children of the Light. His Light will shine in our hearts, so that we will be able to bear what He gives us to bear. And in the meantime we all may look forward to the complete restoration. Then God will remove all the traces of sin, and He will wipe away all the tears. So we may wait for that morning when all darkness will change into everlasting light, for all those who fear Him.

What happiness that we may believe, not only on Easter, but every day of our life, in our risen Lord Jesus Christ. That we may expect everything from Him alone.

*Let us of Christ our Lord and Saviour sing,
For, though God’s equal, though eternal King,
He did not to His rightful glory cling,
Hallelujah, hallelujah!*

*He bore the weakness of our human frame
And He obedient unto death became,
For on a cross He died, in bitter shame.
Hallelujah, hallelujah!*

*Let every tongue confess that Christ is King,
For He is Lord of all created things.
So to the praise of God the Father sing:
Hallelujah, hallelujah!*

Hymn 19:1,3,6

Birthdays in May:

4: Debbie Veenstra
RR 1, Sherkston ON L0S 1R0

10: Rob De Haan
“ANCHOR HOME”, 361 30 Rd, RR 2,
Beamsville ON L0R 1B0

30: Bernie DeVos,
40 Kerman Avenue, Grimsby, ON L3M 3W5

Rob will be 33, and Debby and Bernie will be 23.
Happy Birthday to all three of you.

Last year I gave the name of Greg Aikema, with the request to send him cards. Greg must be 9 years old by now, and he suffers from severe asthma and allergies. I do not know his birth date, but maybe it is time to mention him again. I am sure cards will brighten his day, even if it is not his birthday.

Greg Aikema
7118 -192 St., RR 9, Surrey, BC V4N 3G6

Until next month,

Mrs. R. Ravensbergen
7462 Reg. Rd. 20, RR 1, Smithville, ON, L0R 2A0
e-mail: RWravens@netcom.ca

Committee on Bible Translation

Summarized by
Rev. Paul Aasman

Summary of the Report to General Synod Fergus 1998 from the Committee on Bible Translation Appointed by Synod Abbotsford 1995 of the Canadian Reformed Churches (67 pages, 62 of which are appendices)

Introduction

The Committee on Bible Translations reporting to Synod Abbotsford in 1995, recommended the NIV for use within the churches. While Synod Abbotsford accepted that recommendation, it also decided to appoint a new committee to review specific concerns that had been raised against the NIV as they were presented in the following three sources:

From Past Reports:

Our examination of past reports revealed that there were no sustained arguments on any specific passages of the NIV in reports prior to the Report to Synod 1995. The Report to Synod 1995, however, contained many such discussions. We identified sixty-four instances where that Report records concern or criticism of the NIV. Appendix # 1 of our Report itemizes this search and weighs the material.

From Correspondence sent to Synod Abbotsford 1995:

The Synod Abbotsford 1995 received seventeen letters related to the NIV. Five of those letters drew Synod's attention to specific passages in the NIV. Our committee had reviewed this correspondence and discovered twenty-nine criticisms of the NIV and nine other more general concerns. Appendix # 2 of our Report reviews and weighs these concerns and criticisms one by one.

From Correspondence sent by Churches or Members after Synod Abbotsford 1995:

Our committee received one piece of correspondence after the close of

Synod Abbotsford containing specific concerns about the NIV text. It drew attention to thirteen texts and raised one general point of concern. Appendix # 3 of our Report to Synod Fergus weighs each of these instances.

Events Subsequent to Synod Abbotsford 1995

Our committee had been appointed by Synod Abbotsford 1995 with the expectation that we would be able to participate in a revision of the NIV. The NIV Translation Center had informed the former Committee that a thorough revision of the NIV text was being planned for some time early in the 21st Century, and that any submissions from our Committee would be welcomed.

After the close of Synod 1995, news began to appear indicating that the revision was near to completion already and that one of the guiding principles for this revision was that of inclusive language. The Committee on Bible Translation of the International Bible Society (the IBS holds the NIV copyright), felt that they needed to respond to the changes taking place within English language in regard to gender issues. A huge protest against this aspect of the revision was raised around the world – a protest which our Committee had joined by passing on our reservations to the NIV Translation Center about inclusive language. In response, the International Bible Society decided in May 1997 to terminate the whole inclusive language project. The International Bible Society announced that there were no plans for a further revised edition of the NIV, but that the text would only be subjected to a “normal refining process.”

Conclusion

If we want to be a part of this refining process, we realized that we would need to be selective and restrict our submission to what is of essential im-

portance. This new parameter for our work, along with a deeper appreciation for the complexity of the translation process has helped us to restrict our recommendations to the following ten items:

Exodus 20:4 – we recommended the translation “image” instead of “idol.”

2 Samuel 5:13 – we recommended “from Jerusalem” instead of “in Jerusalem.”

Isaiah 9:20 – we recommended “his arm” instead of “his offspring.”

Zechariah 12:7 – we recommended “the tents of Judah” instead of “the dwellings of Judah.”

Zechariah 12:12 – we recommended the removal of the phrase “with their wives by themselves.”

Matthew 6:10 – we recommended to insert the word “and” to read thus: “and forgive us our debts.”

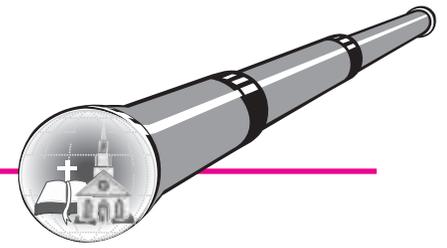
Mark 1:10 – we recommended the insertion of the word “just” to read thus: “Just as Jesus was coming up.”

Mark 1:30 – we recommended the insertion of the words “right away” to read thus: “and right away they told Jesus about her.”

Luke 16:1 – we recommended “who had a steward; and this man” instead of “whose manager.”

John 2:11 – we recommended “My hour” instead of “My time.”

These are the recommendations which we have forwarded to the NIV Translation Center. A copy of the full text of this letter can be found in Appendix 9 of our Report. With this letter, we have completed the mandate given to us by Synod Abbotsford, and we eagerly wait to see if our labours bear fruit in future revisions to the text of the New International Version. 



Observation Deck

By J. VanRietschoten

While on the observation deck, many things come in view. The letter carrier, the fax machine and the Internet bring items into my field of vision. Sometimes people who talk to me, point out worthwhile items. Among the items that came into my field of vision this headline in the Jan. 12 issue of *Christianity Today* caught my eye,

Evangelicals, Catholics Issue Salvation Accord

(By Randy Frame, with reports from Martin King, Baptist Press)

"The Gift of Salvation," a document expressing significant theological agreement between evangelicals and Roman Catholics, is drawing mixed reactions from leading evangelicals.

The document (CT, Dec. 8, 1997, p. 34) represents signers' ability "to express a common faith in Christ and so to acknowledge one another as brothers and sisters in Christ." It has been signed by 16 Roman Catholic leaders and 19 leading evangelicals, including theologians Thomas Oden, J. I. Packer, and Timothy George; seminary presidents Richard Mouw (Fuller) and Kent Hill (Eastern Nazarene); scholars Mark Noll and Os Guinness; Bill Bright, (Campus Crusade for Christ); author Max Lucado; and Robert Seiple, (World Vision).

Signers of the document, released November 12, gave assurances that "for the first time in 450 years, evangelical Protestants and Roman Catholics have publicly agreed to a common understanding of salvation."

FIRST DECLARATION: "The Gift of Salvation" is the second major public document to emerge from a nearly six-year process initiated by Prison Fellowship founder Charles Colson and Catholic leader Richard John Neuhaus of the organization *Religion and Public Life*.

The first document, "Evangelicals and Catholics Together," received much criticism in conservative evangelical circles following its release, prompting two sbc (Southern Baptist Conference - Editor) leaders to withdraw their names (CT, May 15, 1995, p. 53). Critics contended it did not sufficiently grapple with potentially

unbridgeable differences between evangelical and Catholic theology.

Among the concerns critics have expressed is that public statements do not accurately represent the Catholic church. According to this argument, the evangelical public might be wrongly led to believe the Catholic church has conformed to a Reformational position on justification when, in fact, the only ones who have changed are the handful of people who sign these documents.

Instead of ignoring or downplaying important differences between Catholic and evangelical doctrine, "The Gift of Salvation" candidly acknowledges them, saying they "require further and urgent exploration."

Colson. . . says. . . [that] more than one person has suggested to him that had this kind of agreement been achieved five centuries earlier, the Protestant-Catholic split might not have taken place.

Christianity Today then goes on to quote several evangelicals who react favourably to the document and others who are critical of it.

Let me begin by acknowledging that any move within the church of Rome toward a truly biblical confession that salvation is by faith alone is reason for gratitude. It also is reason for continued prayer for reformation within the church of Rome. Is it true, however, that agreement on salvation by faith alone would have prevented "the Protestant-Catholic split?" If such agreement would have prevented the split, would this agreement then not be sufficient for joining together again today?

To *salvation by faith alone* belongs *by grace*. *Salvation through faith* may never be separated from *by grace* (Eph. 2:8-9). It is exactly on the doctrine of grace that the church of Rome draws the line. Within the church of Rome *salvation by faith alone* always has been acknowledged - as long as sacramental grace and good works are coupled to it.

The issue between Rome and the Reformation is not first of all *faith*, but *grace*. Rome gives a different answer to the question "from where does this faith come?" The Roman Catholic signers of the document "The Gift of Salvation" would never

be allowed to sign Lord's Day 25 of the Heidelberg Catechism,

Q. 65 Since then faith alone makes us share in Christ and all His benefits, where does this faith come from?

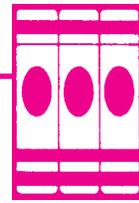
A. 65 From the Holy Spirit, who works it in our hearts by the preaching of the gospel, and strengthens it by the use of the sacraments.

The central doctrine on which Rome must change concerns grace. As long as grace is dispensed by the Pope, and from the Pope down by the bishops and priests, through the sacraments, and not by the Holy Spirit through the preaching of the Gospel, agreement on salvation by faith alone is at best a glimmer of hope. Sacramental grace in effect cancels out salvation by faith alone.

In further discussions, the great difficulty for the Roman leaders who signed the document will be their vow of loyalty to the Pope and to the tradition of the church. Twenty years ago I had opportunity to visit the priest of the local Roman Catholic parish in our town. We discussed faith, grace, transubstantiation, the immaculate conception of Mary, and Mary's assumption into heaven as co-mediatrix with Christ. My discussion partner's remark was: "Give us fifty years and we will have rid ourselves of all this garbage. But in the mean time I will have to obey the Pope and toe the line of the official doctrine of the church."

Just this week I tuned into a Roman Catholic radio program. A monsignor announced that the bishop was going to give an address via the radio. After the bishop had spoken the monsignor offered a prayer - but not to God, nor to Christ, not even in the name of Christ. He prayed that Mary, the mother of God, would bless the bishop and strengthen him with her divine power. Mary with divine power?

May the Lord God work the miracle of reformation in the church of Rome. The very fact that the grace of the Holy Spirit has brought us to reformation is such a miracle. It shows that He is able to do the same for others today. Also we had to come from far. Therefore, we should pray that this small beginning of signing the document "The Gift of Salvation" by some may lead to greater things. I maintain, however, that the participants should not have started their discussion with *faith* but with *grace*. 



Church and Kingdom

By C. Van Dam

Raymond O. Zorn. *Christ Triumphant. Biblical Perspectives on His Church and Kingdom*. Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 1997. Hardcover, 244 pages. \$ 27.99 U.S.

Professor Raymond Zorn has given us a helpful book in this revision of his 1962 work entitled *Church and Kingdom*. The author has served as minister in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and the Reformed Churches of New Zealand before becoming Professor of Systematic Theology and Ethics at Reformed Theological College in Geelong, Australia in 1976 where he served until his retirement in 1989. He makes it clear in the introduction to this work that he has approached his subject as one who has the highest regard for the Word of God and knows himself bound to the Reformed confessions. It is this humble desire to listen to Scripture that makes the book a blessing to interact with and study.

Just as in the first edition, now too the author first defines his terms, then proceeds to discuss the Biblical data respecting church and kingdom, both in the Old and New Testament. The next major section deals with the church and kingdom in the second coming of Christ in which subjects like the meaning of the 1,000 years in Revelation 20 is dealt with. The final section of the book deals with the task of the church in the kingdom of God. Besides issues like church and state, Zorn has now in this revision also included a useful excursus on theonomy since it concerns the relation of God's law to the state.

In dealing with this important and difficult topic of church and kingdom, Zorn correctly argues that the two must be distinguished, but at the same time are closely linked and cannot be divorced from each other. In reviewing the Biblical evidence, he notes that the

New Testament church is the people of God under the kingship of Jesus Christ. The church is the successor and embodiment of the Israel of God. Zorn notes that the sovereignty of Christ is all-embracing, including the principalities of heaven as well as the powers of earth. Although the focal point of Christ's rule comes to expression in His church, it is not correct to limit the extent of His kingdom or sovereignty to the church. Church and kingdom are not the same (p. 67).

How then does the church and her task relate to Christ's kingdom in this present dispensation?

It behooves the church to be diligently engaged in the prosecution of her king's business during this present dispensation, for she is an instrument for the outworking of His sovereignty that will leave no sphere untouched. (p. 133)

In this connection Zorn speaks of the need for the church to engage the truth of the Word against the enemy (pp. 136ff.) and to preach the gospel (pp. 146ff.). Zorn correctly emphasizes that the battle is spiritual and that the church does not bear the sword (p. 139). He also notes the great importance of church discipline in this general context. By church discipline one is expelled from the church and the kingdom (p. 148).

Zorn says many good things in this work. Consider the following examples. In a concise chapter 6 he gives (from the context of the entire Scripture) a sound and clear exposition of Revelation 20 and the thousand year rule of Christ when Satan is bound. Elsewhere he stresses that Christian parents can never relinquish the task of educating their children to the secular state, nor should they give it to the church. It is their responsibility as parents (pp. 155ff). Although much more could have been said on the task of the church towards the state, he does note that the church must witness to the state the demands of God as revealed in his Word (p. 172ff.). He

warns against state paternalism and yielding liberties and responsibilities to the state. Christians have been set free to be in the service of God and must not be a slave of anyone or anything else, including the state. One must be vigilant for the coming Anti-Christ (pp. 177ff.) Considering the necessity for brevity, the excursus on theonomy is excellent (pp. 180-201).

On a more critical note, let me mention two criticisms. I wonder whether the methodology of the author to quote sometimes quite extensively from past and present scholars before launching into his own treatment of the Biblical data is really all that helpful. In my view it would have been better to summarize what he considered the Biblical view to be and thus retain the advantage of his method without getting bogged down in human authors and the need to qualify their statements. In general these could better have been left for footnotes or interacted with while dealing with the Biblical data. (On this point, see, e.g., pp. 38f., 43f., 66ff.) Another point is this. Is it good to speak of the coming glory in terms of the merging of church and kingdom (pp. 77ff.)? Is this not confusing? Is it not better also for the final state to continue to speak of the church as the people of the kingdom? After all the kingdom is more than the people since it includes all of creation, also creation renewed. (Indeed, Zorn speaks in this vein on pp. 71f.)

More could be said both in praise and in critique, with the former outweighing the latter! Let the above encourage the use and study of this book privately or in a study group. The topic is vitally important and has many ramifications. Zorn constantly leads us back to the authoritative Word of God. Reading and reflecting on this book will be instructive and encouraging for it will make one more sensitive to the our triumphant Lord's present sovereign rule and the great plan of redemption we as people of God are involved in!

Schilder: Preserver of the Faith

by N. H. Gootjes

H. Vander Kam, *Schilder: Preserver of the Faith*. New York: Vantage Press, 1996. 106 page, price: \$15.00 U.S.

K. Schilder, a Dutch theologian who worked during the first half of the 20th Century, continues to receive attention. Born in 1890, he became a minister in 1914, and professor of dogmatics in 1934. He taught at the Theological Seminary in Kampen till his death in 1952. Is it worthwhile to still write about this theologian who worked half a century ago? The answer can be derived from the fact that Schilder's theological views are still discussed. To mention some recent publications, J.C. Dee first published a theological biography of Schilder's life and is now republishing annotated sermons.¹ On the occasion of the centenary of Schilder's birth, meetings were held and books published, both in the Netherlands² and in Canada³. Even this year (I write at the end of 1997) an extensive overview of Schilder's theology was published in which the consistency of Schilder's approach is shown and evaluated.⁴

There was already an English biography of Schilder, a translation of a book written a few years after Schilder's death.⁵ To this can now be added the book of Rev. H. Vander Kam, *Schilder: Preserver of the Faith*. Vander Kam is a graduate of Calvin College, who was a minister in the Christian Reformed Church before he became interim pastor at the Free Christian Reformed Church of Kalamazoo, MI, in 1993. He passed away a year or so ago.

The book gives a very readable overview of Schilder's life. Chapter 2 sets the stage by recounting the situation of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands in the twenties, after the death of A. Kuyper and H. Bavinck. I think there is good reason for the comparison Vander Kam makes between Kuyper and Schilder (p. 24). Among the reformed theologians after Kuyper, Schilder came closest to filling the vacuum left by Kuyper's death. It should be remembered that the range of Kuyper's publications is considerably wider than that of Schilder. On the other hand, Schilder was usually more profound and less speculative than Kuyper was.

Vander Kam reviews extensively Schilder's journalistic work. The devel-

opments of his weekly, "*De Reformatie*" are recorded. In comparison, Schilder's books receive less attention, with the exception of his doctoral dissertation on the concept of paradox. Of particular interest are the accounts of Schilder's two visits to this continent, in 1938 (pp. 51-58) and in 1947 (pp. 92f.), containing eye witness information.

The author also puts the record straight on the suspension and deposition of Schilder (pp. 73ff.) and pleads for the Liberation as legitimate (p. 103). The author makes a few slips, e.g. when he says that Schilder had to be in hiding during most of the time between December 1940 and the early part of 1944 (p. 70). In fact, after Schilder was released from prison in December 1940, he was not allowed to publish, but he continued to teach at the Seminary in Kampen, until July, 1942. When Schilder narrowly escaped being arrested, he went into hiding.⁶ S. Greijdanus did not retire in 1939, but in 1942, and he did not put in writing that he favored someone other than H.N. Ridderbos to succeed him (p. 95).

It is regrettable that the first chapter, a brief survey of the history of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, from the 16th to the 20th Century, con-

tains so many mistakes. Was it a first rough sketch, and did the author die before he had a chance to rework it? But the rest of the book is valuable. It can serve as a brief, to the point presentation of Schilder's work for the preservation of the faith.

¹J.C.C. Dee, *K. Schilder: zijn leven en werk* (Goes: Oosterbaan & Le Cointre, 1990) and: *Een schriftgeleerde aan het woord: een keuze uit de preken van prof. dr. K. Schilder* (Goes: Oosterbaan & Le Cointre, 1995). An English source on Schilder's theology is J. De Jong, *Accommodatio Dei: A Theme in K. Schilder's Theology of Revelation* (Kampen: Mondiss, 1990).

²J. De Bruijn and G. Harinck, eds., *Geen Duimbreed: Facetten van leven en werk van Prof. dr. K Schilder* (Baarn: Ten Have, 1990); J. Douma, C. Trimp, and K. Veling, eds., *K. Schilder: Aspecten van zijn werk* (Barneveld: Vuurbaak, 1990).

³J. Geertsema, ed., *Always Obedient: Essays on the Teachings of Dr. Klaas Schilder* (Phillipsburg: P&R, 1995).

⁴K. Van Bekkum, "De gereformeerde theologie van Klaas Schilder" in *Radix* 23:3 (Sept. 1997).

⁵R. Van Reest, *Schilder's Struggle for the Unity of the Church* (trans. T. Plantinga; Neerlandia: Inheritance Publications, 1990). See also J. Faber's article "Klaas Schilder's Life and Work" in *Always Obedient*.

⁶ See e.g. W.G. De Vries, *K. Schilder als gevangene en onderduiker* (Groningen: De Vuurbaak, 1977) 43.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

In an edition of *Clarion* dated August 22 1997, A. de Jong wrote a letter to the editor regarding the huge sums of money spent on Church buildings and whether this is good stewardship. Admittedly this is my summary of what was written.

I would like to take this train of thought a little further.

In the country I live it is not uncommon that besides building a new church huge sums of money (half a million to one million) are also pumped into an organ. Besides the question of whether this money is properly spent in this way (which de Jong already has addressed) I have a second question:

Is it proper with a view to the upbuilding of the congregation?

What do I mean?

Why (only) an organ?

One congregation usually has three, maybe four organists. There may be 30/40 or even 100 members with musical abilities, for whatever instrument. Why not use all the God-given musical talents available in a congregation? Are not all members required to use the talents they have been given? It should then be self-evident that room is created to employ these talents. It wouldn't always need to be an orchestra, variations could be done weekly or monthly. (Piano / organ / orchestra / recorder whatever) In this way all together can make a truly joyful noise for the Lord our God.

David de Vos
Amersfoort
The Netherlands

Please mail, e-mail or fax letters for publication to the editorial address.

They should be 300 words or less.

Those published may be edited for style or length.

Please include address and phone number.

A second Canadian Reformed Church is instituted in Winnipeg, Manitoba

January 4, 1998, was a historical day in the Canadian Reformed Church of Winnipeg. A second church was instituted. For about four years already we have had four services per Sunday as the congregation was split into wards, East and West.

During the past two years a group of members of the east ward worked toward instituting a second congregation. In order to get the whole congregation involved, the consistory twice approached the congregation with a questionnaire to find out how the congregation viewed an institution. This, together with the usual meetings and input from the group of members of the East, led the consistory to consent to a plan proposed by the brothers of the East. The consistory asked the fall Classis Alberta/Manitoba for advice regarding the plan to institute and received a favourable response.

On November 26, 1997, the members of the east ward who supported the plan to institute attended a meeting to elect officebearers. Since the present consistory was made up of four elders and two deacons from the west ward and the same number from the east ward, the proposal was made to retain the elders and deacons that would be members of the east church as the new consistory. After consultation with the elders of the west ward and the chairman, Rev. K. Jonker, this proposal was put to a vote and accepted unanimously.

So it came about that on January 4, 1998, at 3:00 p.m., the whole congregation, East and West, came together in a combined service to witness the ordination of the elders and deacons of the new Winnipeg-East church. To accommodate us all, the Covenant Christian Reformed Church building was rented for the occasion.

Rev. Jonker had chosen as text for his sermon 1 Timothy 3:15, where we read: *If I am delayed, you may know*

how one ought to behave in the household of God which is the church of the living God, the pillar and bulwark of the truth. Using as theme, "God's Word on the Glory of God's Church," he explained the following points:

1. God's Word bears God's Church
2. God's Church bears God's Word

Rev. Jonker stressed that the church is not a human institution. It is the house of our holy God. Nor is the church a building of wood and stone. It is the living congregation of the living God. The sure Word bears the church and, in turn, the firmly founded church bears the Word. The church of the living God is the pillar and bulwark of the truth. So we are concerned with a divine gift and our task. In true faith we must accept the whole truth of God from heaven. In humble faith we must fulfill our ministry in this world. Each local church of our Lord must know that she is founded on God's Word. At the same time she must carry the only truth into the world.

After the sermon, brothers W. Gortemaker, Jacob Kuik, W. Raap, and H. Slaa Sr., were reordained as elders, and brothers R. Dewitt and Jake Kuik as deacons. Immediately after the service the provisional chairman of the new consistory, br. Jacob Kuik, gave the floor to Rev. Jonker who congratulated the new congregation and wished us the blessing of the Lord. He spoke of the joy that they shared with us on this occasion, but also of the sadness because of the departure of approximately 215 members.

Br. Bill Van Assen relayed congratulations and best wishes on behalf of the Canadian Reformed Church at Carman. He spoke of the good relationship that has always existed between Winnipeg and Carman in the past and expressed his confidence that this would not change with the new congregation. Br.

Van Assen also spoke on behalf of Classis Alberta/Manitoba.

Br. H. Slaa read three letters of congratulations: from Immanuel and Providence churches in Edmonton, AB, and from the church at Taber, AB.

Br. Jacob Kuik spoke a few words of appreciation for all the best wishes. He also noted that Providence Reformed Church of Winnipeg had sent observers to witness the institution.

The singing of Psalm 127:1 and 2 brought to a close this momentous event in the history of the church at Winnipeg. We went home with thankful hearts.

J. Jissink Sr. 





Press Release Classis Alberta/ Manitoba of March 10, 1998

On behalf of the convening church Rev. E. J. Tiggelaar called the meeting to order. We sang Psalm 84: 1, 4, read from Colossians 1 and joined in opening prayer. The delegates were welcomed. A special welcome was made to Rev. J. Moesker and to Rev. R.E. Schouten, who were present as delegates from Regional Synod, and to the delegates from the newly instituted congregation at Winnipeg. In the memorabilia it was mentioned that Rev. C. Kleyn declined the call to the church at Coaldale, that Rev. J. Moesker accepted the call to Carman, and that the church at Denver continues to function without a minister, due to the fact that Rev. M. A. Pollock has been given a leave of absence.

After the credentials were checked, Classis was constituted and the officers suggested by the previous Classis took their places, Rev. R. Eikelboom as chairman, Rev. W. B. Slomp, as Vice-Chairman, and Rev. R. Aasman as clerk.

The church at Denver requested the release of Rev. M. A. Pollock on the basis of article 12 of the Church Order. The following decision was made:

"Classis, having heard the request of the Church at Denver to seek the release of Rev. M. Pollock according to Article 12 C.O., and having heard from the Rev. M. Pollock his request to be released according to Article 12, and further, having heard the Church Visitors' advice to the Church at Denver suggesting to release Rev. M. A. Pollock according to Article 12, decides with sorrow to grant the release of Rev. M. A. Pollock from his office as minister of the Word."

The deputies of Regional Synod gave concurring advice. The chairman wished the Church at Denver much wisdom and the blessings of the Lord in dealing with this sad situation of Rev. M. Pollock's release from the office of minister of the Word.

The report of the treasurer of Classis was received with thankfulness. A report from the Ad Hoc Committee's Report re Classis expenses was tabled. It was decided to thank the committee for its work and that as a general rule, to reimburse the delegates for travelling

expenses at the rate of 25 cents per kilometer or for air fare whichever is lower.

The reports of the Church for the Books of the treasurer and of the Church for the Inspection of the Classical Archives were received with thankfulness. The Contact Persons with the provincial governments made their reports, which also were received with gratitude.

In closed session Church Visitor reports to the churches at Barrhead, Neerlandia and Edmonton Providence were read and received with thankfulness. The report for Aid to Needy Students was also received with thankfulness. As a result of the acceptance of this report the churches will be levied at \$3.00 per communicant member.

A proposal from the Church of Providence Edmonton to change the regulations of Classis was adopted as follows:

If observers are present at Classis upon invitation by the convening Church, the chair shall give these observers the floor sometime during the meeting to address Classis.

The convening Church shall inform the session of the local FCS congregation that the observers shall not be ad-

mitted to closed sessions, as per Classical Regulations Article 3.B.2.

The churches at Coaldale, and Denver requested pulpit supply. This was granted. The church at Winnipeg Redeemer requested for Rev. K. Jonker to be their counsellor. Question Period (ad Article 44 C. O) was held. The next Classis was scheduled to be convened by the church at Calgary on June 9, 1998, with alternate date October 20th, 1998. The proposed officers are: Chairman Rev. E. J. Tiggelaar, vice-Chairmen Rev. R. Eikelboom, Clerk Rev. W. B. Slomp. Rev. R. Eikelboom was appointed as observer for Presbytery of the Dakotas of the O.P.C., with Rev. T. Lodder as alternate.

Several members made use of the question period. The chairman judged that no censure (ad article 34 C.O.) was necessary. The Acts and the Press release were read and approved. Classis joined in singing Psalm 121: 4. The chairman led in thanksgiving prayer and closed Classis.

For Classis Alberta/Manitoba
Rev. W. B. Slomp,
Vice chairman at that time.

C



OUR LITTLE MAGAZINE

By Aunt Betty



Dear Busy Beavers:

Have you enjoyed your school year so far? Are you getting good marks for all your work? You must be almost at the spring break now. What are you planning to do in your break? Helping Mom with the spring cleaning? Or are you going on holidays somewhere?

Well, Easter is also nearly here. Don't you think it is wonderful that we can celebrate Easter – the death of our Lord Jesus Christ? It is so wonderful because the reason Christ died on the cross was to save us from our sins. Do we deserve this at all, that another man died on the cross especially for you and me? Not, not at all.

But that is the miracle of God's love! He sent His only beloved Son into the world, so that we might live forever, not here on earth, but with Him on His heavenly throne. And we did absolutely nothing for this gift! Isn't that wonderful? That is why we always have to be happy and sing praises to God's Name, to show that we are truly thankful for His wonderful gift of love.

Have a wonderful Easter!

APRIL BIRTHDAY LIST

- | | |
|------------------------|------------------------|
| 9. Alyson Bosch | 18. Jason Linde |
| 9. Jeremy deHaan | 18. Melissa Brouwer |
| 9. Kimberley Tuininga | 24. Rianne Lodder |
| 10. Allison VanderVeen | 25. Tim Sikkema |
| 12. Bradley Bergsma | 29. Lynette DeHaas |
| 13. Pamela Hulst | 30. Jonathan Vandenbos |
| 16. Megan Strating | |

IN OTHER WORDS

Each of the following is a mixed up name of a well-know character in the Bible. Unscramble the names. (Punctuation is to be ignored).

1. Go Dine! _____
2. Heal _____
3. Sails _____
4. On Aim _____
5. Been Ur? _____
6. Warden _____
7. Is Hale _____
8. Her Beak _____
9. Lead In _____
10. All Hide _____
11. No Looms _____
12. Tie Pal _____
13. Name Sash _____
14. Part I Hop! _____
15. M.O.'s Hat _____
16. Pet Hens _____
17. Hit a Log _____
18. Ruin Close _____
19. Been a Dog? _____
20. Lag a Mile! _____

RIDDLES

by Busy Beaver Rebecca Van Dijk

1. Why do people chew gum on the train?
Because it goes "choo-choo".
2. When do people lay eggs?
When they lay them on their plate.

PICTURE CODE

by Busy Beaver Colette Vandenbos

A	☺	F	p	K	!	P	↓	U	↙	Z	☺
B	☺	G	☞	L	---	Q	↑	V	☞		
C	☺	H	△	M	☺	R	→	W	☺		
D	d	I	⊕	N	x	S	←	X	☞		
E	.	J	☞	O	☺	T	↘	Y	☞		

← ⊕ x ☞ ☺ ↓ ← ☺ --- ☺ :

☞ p ☞ ☞ ☞

PEN PAL WANTED

Kendra is 11 years old, in Grade 6. She would like to have a pen-pal, to share letters with. If you'd also like a pen-pal, write to her at:

Kendra Feenstra
PO Box 2, 5117 Canborough Road
Wellandport, ON L0R 2J0



From the Mailbox

Thanks for your letter and puzzles, *Rebecca van Dijk*. They are quire funny. Also thanks for all those stickers. Write to me again, won't you, Rebecca? Bye for now.

Thanks also to *Colette Vandenbos*, for her letter and puzzle. I have put your puzzle into the Clarion today. Till next time.

ANSWERS TO:

17. Goliath; 18. Cornelius; 19. Abednego; 20. Gamablie; 1. Gideon; 2. Leah; 3. Silas; 4. Naomi; 5. Reuben; 6. Andrew; 7. Elisha; 8. Rebekah; 9. Daniel; 10. Delilah; 11. Solomon; 12. Pilate; 13. Manasseh; 14. Potophar; 15. Thomas; 16. Stephen;

In Other Words

