

# The Presbyterian Guardian

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Reaching Young People for Christ

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## OPC Assembly to meet in May

The Fortieth General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church is scheduled to convene on May 14 at the First Orthodox Presbyterian Church of Manhattan Beach, Calif. This year's assembly is the first in the church's history to be chosen on a representative basis, with ministers and elders elected by presbyteries according to an apportionment plan.

**Overtures:** An overture concerning membership of the Committee on Foreign Missions (seeking to have part of the membership chosen directly by the presbyteries instead of at-large by the Assembly) was reported here earlier.

An overture from the Presbytery of Ohio urges the General Assembly "to give specific counsel to the presbyteries regarding ordination of members of secret societies as elders and/or deacons in member churches of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, to provide clearer direction toward uniform practice to maintain the peace and purity of the Church." The concern expressed by the presbytery arises from the ordina-

tion of an active Mason as elder in one of its congregations.

The Presbytery of the Dakotas is overturing the Assembly "to instruct its Committee on Ecumenicity and Interchurch Relations to insure that the Plan of Union with the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod provide that no congregation shall have subordinate doctrinal standards for membership or office in addition to the official constitution of the church."

**Docket:** The item of the docket that is most likely to generate lengthy discussion may well be the report of the Committee on Sabbath Matters. This report is to be heard immediately following the reports of the three major standing committees to insure its receiving adequate attention at an early point in the proceedings. Budget matters, always capable of taking up time, may do so again this year; inflation, devaluation of the dollar, the need to press ahead with the work, all combine to enlarge the needs of the committees on Home and Foreign Missions and Christian Education.

## Anaheim group leaves UPUSA

Approximately 600 members of the 1600-member First Presbyterian Church of Anaheim are forming a new, Covenant Presbyterian Church, independent of the denomination. Reasons for the departure are dissatisfaction with the UPUSA's espousal of such Marxist causes as the Angela Davis defense fund, the COCU talks, and the feeling that it was useless to battle with the "hierarchy." The new group has called former pastor, the Rev. Ralph H. Didier, who was a leader in the movement in the 1972 General Assembly to break off the COCU talks. (Most observers predict that this year's Assembly will rejoin the talks.) The Anaheim group is meeting in a former Lutheran Church temporarily.

Other Southern California congregations have also left the parent denomination. The Brooklyn Heights Church in San Diego withdrew with its property, but a court decision has awarded the property to the denomina-

tion. The Community Church of Palm Springs, which left the denomination in 1967, is still struggling to keep its property.

### We really flipped!

—our pages, that is, in last month's *Guardian*. We hope you weren't too frustrated trying to find where the pages went. All of them were there, right page numbers, wrong arrangement.

If you really want them in the right order, do this: Open to the center. Unbend staples and remove. Lift up first two sheets, place top one (pages 38, 43) under second (pages 40, 41)—without turning either sheet over!—and reinsert the staples. Crimp the staples, and everything is in order—now!

We are sorry, and we'll certainly warn the printer not ever to let it happen again.

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# "Our Father in heaven" . . . and fathers on earth

LUNELLE L. ROBINSON

While thinking through the wording of the Lord's Prayer recently, a new idea occurred to me. Not only in this prayer, but time and again we Christians refer to God as "Father" in prayers and religious discussions. And I began to wonder what sort of image of God the word "father" suggests to our children. Their concept of God as Father is surely based on their knowledge of earthly fathers.

The dictionary defines "father" as (1) the male parent to whom filial affection and respect are due; (2) a symbol of authority; and (3) one who has full control.

We have reacted with distaste against the Victorian image of the stern unsmiling father. But have we not gone too far the other direction? Our modern father is the male parent who, all too often, has abdicated his responsibility for the training and counseling of his children. Admittedly, part of the fault must be accepted by the wife, for many of these have been more than willing to usurp the father's role. On the other hand, a mother may have been forced to take up the father's duties because he was "too busy at the office"—or on the golf course—to really know his offspring. Some fathers, though, have worked so hard to be "pals" that they have made themselves equals—not parents—to their children. Either way, the child is taught to give no real respect to his earthly father, and so can have little foundation on which to build a respect for the Father in heaven.

Even sadder, of course, are the many homes with no male parent on hand at all. Whether that is due to death, divorce, or desertion, or the separations caused by war or prison terms, the result is a child who has no real concept of "father" at all. Even worse yet are those "homes" where one male adult follows another; such a succession of "uncles" has taught some youngsters to think of "father" as a distinctively evil term.

Not only do unfathered homes themselves foster something less than the best ideas of a father, even where the mother does all she can to compensate, but society itself seems bent on belittling the father. The male parent is caricatured as a bumbling boob or a stern unbending tyrant. The world is full of advice for fathers—much of it subversive—but the Bible should still be the guide for the Christian father.

"Thou art my father, my God and the rock of my salvation" (Psalm 89:26). The psalmist is speaking of God. But he sees a father as one who is strong, a stable anchor in the confusion of the world. How fortunate the child who

has a father on earth upon whom to depend.

"Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him" (Psalm 103:13). To pity, to sympathize, to empathize, is the normal attitude of a father. And that pity on the part of earthly fathers should be a picture of the Lord's concern. It is a pity that is determined by knowledge of the children; "For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust" (verse 14).

"Hear, O sons, a father's instruction, and be attentive, that you may gain insight" (Proverbs 4:1). It is the father who is responsible to counsel and train up his children in the ways of the Lord.

"Discipline your son, and he will give you rest; he will give delight to your heart" (Proverbs 29:17). "For the Lord disciplines whom he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives. . . . God is treating you as sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline? If you are left without discipline . . . then you are illegitimate children and not sons" (Hebrews 12:6-8). Discipline, discipline in love, is the father's responsibility. To neglect that duty is to ask for children who hate and despise their parents; it is to treat them as illegitimates. Through loving discipline, however, a child may be molded into a responsible, well-adjusted—and parent-honoring—adult, one who calls his parents blessed.

"For the Father loves the Son . . ." (John 5:20). "Love is patient and kind. . ." (1 Corinthians 13:4). Again, it is love that is the key to successful fatherhood. The father who loves his child—enough to discipline him as the heavenly Father disciplines us!—will understand that love is more than giving birthday presents. True love embraces strength, understanding, counsel, and discipline. Love is patient and kind—but it is not soft.

Any earthly father can provide his offspring with needed food, shelter, clothing, and the "things" so prized by the world. Only a Christian father can help his child find true meaning and purpose in life. Only a Christian father can bring up a child who can honor God as the Father because he understands what it means to honor an earthly father.

*Mrs. Robinson describes herself as not a "theologian" or one with great insight into the Word of God; but "simply a wife, mother, and teacher who feels great sympathy for those of today's children who face our world with material wealth but spiritual poverty." She is a member of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Abilene, Texas.*

# A word to discouraged sponsors of youth groups

EDWARD L. VOLZ



It's a fantastic program "they" have: "Teen Scene," every Sunday at 5 p.m. Each week there's a big-name speaker, an evangelist, a Christian football player, or some top Christian folk-rock group. "They" have a reputation all over town, and the kids flock to that church by the hundreds. "They" have class; "they" have enthusiasm; "they" have the kids!

Meanwhile at the Old People's Church, five or six kids sit in a circle, awkwardly thumbing their Bibles, hoping to get out by 6:15, while I drone on about some abstruse point of theology I never understood, even in seminary. We have plenty of room; we have lots of chairs; we have a young people's group—but not many kids!

If this fits your situation, then no doubt you've felt like giving up your job more than once—especially after someone from that "other church" has been boasting to you about their great youth ministry and wondering out loud why God isn't blessing you with success in your youth work.

But, dear brothers and sisters in small, struggling churches of Reformed persuasion—take heart! There is much reason for encouragement and hope, if you look in the right places. Let me suggest where that encouragement is found.

## What are we doing here?

First, let's remember just what our purpose is in ministering to youth. It is *not* to have a big flashy, youth-attracting program, even one where the gospel is central. One local minister has pointed out that if you have a sensational program, all you attract is a sensation-seeking crowd. And many who, because of their flashy programs, have drawn large, enthusiastic crowds and registered numerous conversions, have seen later on that the lasting effect of their program was very small indeed.

Rather, our purpose, in the words of the Savior, is to "make disciples" (Matthew 28:19). We are to teach our youth the way of the Lord and how to be his followers. We are to teach them to walk in the light (1 John 1:7), and how to grow to maturity in Christ (Ephesians 4:13-16). And of course, what we long to see is not just information transferred, but the truth built into lives as seen in their transformed character. Now, while this purpose can be accomplished in large groups, the small group is actually much more suited to this purpose. Thus, while the crowds followed Jesus, the real work of

discipling was done with the small group who followed the Master and listened and asked and pondered.

## Making disciples in small groups

The small group is great because it gives a qualified leader more time to deal with the real needs and questions of each individual. Work in general education today is stressing the need for individualized programs of study and training for individual needs. Let us not neglect this insight and lust after the idol of attractive, but pedagogically weak, mass meetings.

The small group is great because it can provide an atmosphere of seriously thinking through the truth, rather than attempting to have it absorbed by the techniques of mob conditioning. It seems to me that our culture is becoming increasingly dependent on group consensus as a basis for action. In this environment the Christian can only lose, since I don't expect the majority of Americans to support Christian principles—at least not unless God sends a mighty revival. What we need are Christians trained to analyze the issues of our times, to do it in the light of God's Word, and to think through to conclusions on which they are prepared to act—alone, if necessary—because they are true disciples, committed heart and soul to the truth.

The small group may also be a great aid in achieving our purpose, since we want active Christians—not spectators who watch attractive programs and do nothing. Almost all of us love to be entertained by someone else. And too often the only involvement a person has with the church is of this passive kind. But such an attitude spells death to the church, and a stunted life for the one who holds it. We must cultivate active involvement by God's people in God's program, and we must begin this work early.

The small group also provides an opportunity for giving each member a job appropriate to his own abilities. In fact, the whole orientation of the group can (and I believe it should) be toward action and change, whether in terms of personal growth, development of individual talents, ministry to other believers, or proclamation of the gospel to the lost.

No doubt many good things have been done by large groups, and we can rejoice in that. But if we have fewer young people around, we must not feel that we have been somehow sidelined. We are called to develop a ministry that is personal, individual, sincere, relevant and scriptural.

Praise God for each one in my small group. Praise God for each hardworking leader of small groups. May we all, with new determination and without apology, work to develop a program that capitalizes on the strengths of the smaller group approach.

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*The Rev. Edward L. Volz is associate pastor of the First Orthodox Presbyterian Church of Long Beach, Calif. His responsibilities include planning for and working in the church's ministry to young people.*

## Reaching Young People for Christ

LEONARD E. MILLER

The brochure promised "a full day of seminars and workshops, including: How to win over a crowd of young people. How to make your youth activities exciting. The theology and philosophy of youth work. Creative resources and where to find them. Etc." It sounded interesting, only cost \$10, so I went.

It was indeed a full day. The young men of Youth Specialties succeeded, with rich doses of humor and good sense, in presenting a convincing case for the proposition that *if organized youth groups are not successful, it is not because there is any lack of creative ideas for activities*. Their "Ideas" series of books fairly bursts with "crowdbreakers," stunts, skits, games, contests, and discussions, as well as tips on publicity, camping, silk-screening, and the use of multimedia. It was truly fun, and I'm impressed.

### What's a "successful program"?

Now what I'd like to share with you, in addition to a brief rundown on the seminar, are some thoughts about "youth groups" and how they work. Let me begin with my attitudes in going to this seminar.

Partly I went out of curiosity. What in the world is an outfit called "Youth Specialties" selling? How do you "win over a crowd of young people"? As a member of my church's Christian education committee, I felt a need to sample the "state of the art" in running youth groups. Also, I must confess a certain fascination with what makes for a "successful program," or at least with what makes one well organized.

Mostly though, I was skeptical, a doubter when it comes to some of the popular ways of doing things, including methods of evangelizing youth. So I wondered, Is this another watering down of the gospel to appeal to youth? Is it fun and games to keep our wandering ones off the streets and drugs, but without truthfully addressing the condition of their souls? Is it a coverup, a cosmetic job to give the appearance of life to dead-on-the-vine "evangelicals"?

### Humor opens up "creative communication"

As I mentioned, I did have fun at the seminar. The idea men proved their competence by warming me up! For this I am grateful, because a good belly-laugh is a great relaxer. The principle taught here of course is that humor, being contagious, is a great means of generating rapport. This was very effectively demonstrated in the seminar's

first session.

Fine. But after we get together through humor, how do we stay together when we get serious? Appropriately, the seminar-ians then shifted their emphasis to "creative communication." This subject was divided into (a) what is *not* communication (e.g., indoctrination, lecturing, memorization, seeking a predetermined response); (b) the inherent limitations on communication (due to imprecision of language, and the effects of differing points of view); and (c) what is *creative* communication.

This last part appealed strongly to me because it stressed the importance of repeatedly defining and agreeing upon the meanings of the words we use, the need always to apply concepts to practical situations, and the principle that communication has the goal of stimulating thought and action. In other words, what we say to young people should help *them* to make their own decisions. (Incidentally, another negative vote against television programming was cast here; TV seldom qualifies as communication in these terms!)

### What is a theology of youth work?

The other session I would like to report on was "Theology and Philosophy of Youth Work." The "theology and philosophy" was an attempt to cover a great deal of territory in a short period of time, and so it is difficult to relate. But the essence of it was, I believe, to emphasize the need for an awareness of ourselves and our youth as individuals, and of the environment of change, relativism, and spiritual vacuum in which we live.

Besides whatever reading, experience, and reflection may be helpful to achieving this awareness, we must consciously cultivate our own outlook to correspond to everyday *reality*, the place where the truth has to do with our lives. To do this we need to sort true issues from "non-issues": don't confuse Christianity with Americanism; don't spout rules (such as length of skirts) when you have the opportunity to teach principles (sexuality and its right use); don't get hung up on appearances or on a standard of living. I was not surprised to learn that the leader of this session had spent some time at L'Abri with Dr. Schaeffer.

### What the "specialists" left out

Despite what I felt was the general wholesomeness of the seminar, I also felt that a vital area was left unexplored. Though reassured concerning the integrity of

some who plan and create activities for youth, I was still left with such questions as, When and how is the propositional truth of the gospel to be introduced to youth? How is the use of the means of grace to be encouraged?

These scruples are significant to me, because it has been my observation that it is precisely these questions that often determine whether an otherwise wholesome program is in fact a *Christian* program. Ask yourself: "At what point in dealing with my children as a Christian parent or youth leader, or in witnessing to them, am I least adequate?" I believe a large majority of us will answer, "At the point of actually *teaching*, especially in words or propositions, the principles of Scripture."

It seems to me that at least some guidelines are demanded here in any treatment of the planning and execution of a program. For, whatever else it may be, a youth group being sponsored by a church should be evangelistic and a means of growth in the knowledge and experience of God. To be fair, the seminar meant only to deal with the dynamics under which we can relate with this generation as real persons, and the bywords of these dynamics would seem to be truth and openness—salted with humor.

But, as many parents can testify, a good ("open," "truthful") relationship does not always result in young ones embracing Christ. Therefore I feel justified in stating that specific dynamics for presenting the *gospel* itself to youth need to be considered. To stimulate your thinking, and trigger some further discussion, allow me to offer some principles that I believe should pertain to youth work:

### 1. The need to declare the gospel

In the nature of the gospel commission itself, we are to *declare* (Matthew 28: 19, 20). The gospel is a proclamation, a public announcement (Isaiah 61). It is an open invitation (Isaiah 55; Matthew 11:28-30). It is a command to repent and believe (Mark 1:15; Acts 3:19; 17:30). It is a powerful message (Romans 1:16).

In keeping with the character of the gospel then, I believe we are compelled to be open and direct, forthright and unapologetic about what we are doing. All the cards must be on the table. Perhaps we may say, *the purity of the gospel presentation is related to its directness*. We must not obscure its message in any way.

If we must be direct, what then do we say? That is no problem, for the Scriptures provide the clear examples of the Lord himself and of the apostles in their preaching. Still, it may need to be emphasized in this day that . . .

A. *Repentance and faith are the inseparable responses through which we receive the salvation offered in the gospel* (Acts 20:21). Responses to what? The answer to this question tells us what we ought to be talking about, relying always on the power of the Holy Spirit to touch hearts, to convict hearts of sin against the person of our most holy and provident Creator, and to generate in them an utter reliance upon Jesus Christ to reconcile us to God through his death on the cross for sinners.

My "one-to-one" experiences, such as they are, have taught me that a great amount of *specifics* may be needed here, since ignorance of the Bible is so widespread (yes, even in our churches). I have found also that the preaching that has done me the most good has been very clear on the greatness of God, the seriousness of my sins, and the total effectiveness of the atonement upon which my

salvation depends.

B. *The gospel is both an invitation to fullness of life and happiness, and a call for total commitment to Christ as Lord* (John 10:7-10, and Luke 14:25-35). In the Bible, abundant life and commitment to truth are integrally related (Psalm 1; Proverbs 3). Growth in grace is the inevitable fruit of salvation (Romans 6-8; James; 1 Peter; 1 John; Hebrews 12). Dare we misrepresent this "fact of life" even inadvertently in a misguided emphasis on "appeal"? *The gospel must be presented as nothing less than a totally new way of living* (Ephesians 4; Philippians 4; John 3).

C. *The real newness of the Christian experience is based upon our new relationship to God "in Christ"* (1 Corinthians 5:17; Ephesians 1). Thus certain distinctions need to be made clear: An enjoyable time among Christians is not necessarily Christian fellowship; moral living is not the same as holiness. Our life in Christ transcends, is much richer than, all its outward characteristics, since it is a marriage with God himself, beginning in the heart and soul, and working outward through the whole person (Ephesians 3:14-19), and then on to include others.

### 2. The need to demonstrate the gospel

For his own reasons, God has chosen to propagate his gospel through people (Romans 10; 1 Corinthians 1). We sinners are put in the position of preaching to other sinners (1 Timothy 1:12-17). As such, it is becoming for us to exhibit true humility (Philippians 2), and a sincere affection and compassion for the souls (and bodies) of lost men (1 Thessalonians 2:7-12; Acts 20:18-35). In presenting the gospel, we must demonstrate compassion and love toward others, simply because that is what God has demonstrated already toward us (Colossians 4:2-6; 1 Corinthians 13).

God uses not only preachers, not only greatly gifted individuals, but all his saved ones to transmit his message (1 Peter 2:9). And God uses us not only in the context of "official" church activities, but also in our homes, our jobs—in short, he uses *who we are, what we are, where we are*.

In my seminar notes on this topic I have written down, "realistic." By this I mean to express the idea that people to whom we deliver THE gospel will be attempting to understand it by observing OUR gospel—how it works in our lives. Particularly is this true of our children. They have the right to know, and we have the obligation to show, what it means to be in Christ.

*If we would preach Jesus, we must be prepared to yield our entire selves and our daily lives to God for a demonstration of his power and truth.*

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*Mr. Miller is an elder in Knox Orthodox Presbyterian Church, Silver Spring, Maryland. About this article he says, "I expect those readers who have persevered with me this far to offer comments and improvements on what I have attempted to set forth. And, let me add, these principles apply to all people, not just those working with youth!"*

*The Guardian would welcome further comments, both on how we may best establish "rapproch" with young people, and what we should do with it once we have established it.*

# SEX — and your teenager

ROLLIN P. KELLER

Everyone agrees with the philosopher who said, "One picture is worth a thousand words." And we still acknowledge that "the pen is mightier than the sword." That is, we do until it comes to pornography.

When the President's sophisticated commission comes in with a report on the effects of pornography, it says that dirt and violence in movies and books have no catalytic impact on our youth. And so, with the chattering of a typewriter on expensive paper, the wisdom of the ages is swept away.

## "Lust is love"

This is the way our society defines lust. The Christian can hardly expect to be understood when he allows his Lord's teaching to condition his conscience: "But I say unto you, that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart" (Matthew 5:28). The movie industry, with its X ratings, implies that filthiness is really no problem so long as you are an adult. Adultery is the thing for adults!

But what about your children? It's really hard to determine how and where it started, but our society has become well structured for the moral destruction of your children. And it's not just that your children may have to pass the movie with its posters of X-rated films, or drive by the drive-in and catch a glimpse of lust in action on the screen; the process begins much earlier.

Christian parents sit idly by as their grammar schoolers engage in compulsory social dancing. After all, that's innocent enough at that age; they're only children! Ah, yes; but that's only the beginning of the race, and social pressures do increase and are hard to buck. And soon we hear, "Why can't I wear makeup and minis and pantyhose? All the other girls in fifth grade do!"

We even may be helping the process along by implying to our children that it's somehow undesirable for a child to act like a child—"When are you ever going to grow up?" (In due time, parents; in due time!) Soon enough they'll be in Junior high, going steady, and then in Senior high here comes the blow. "Think of your future! You can't make it in today's world without a college education."

For more than six years your child has been taught to think of himself or herself in terms of sexual attractiveness. Sexual gratification has been held up as the goal of human longing. And now the teenager looks ahead to four or more years in college—at the very peak years of sexual drive. Not only does society's pattern contradict natural sexual development, but society seems determined to make the contradiction even more painful to bear.

Is it any wonder that we have "temporary arrangements," "communal marriages," and the greatest VD epidemic in American history? How many hours can we expect a starving person to wait for supper when the aroma of food fills the air? The wonder is not that so many young people "get in trouble"; the wonder is that so many manage to survive

more or less undamaged.

## Where is the answer?

Where do we look for answers? Is this but another technical problem to be solved by a pill or the shocking callousness of abortion? Is VD only a problem for doctors who do have penicillin to take care of it?

Do you not believe that Christ is the answer? But then, why are you not on the firing lines as Christ's servant? Why have you not sought out positions on school boards or in PTA organizations or in political office? If the salt has lost its savor—in the midst of a rotten world—the salt is good for nothing!

Our godless peers have their answer: The New Morality. Anything goes, so long as you do it "lovingly." The college years are not a prison term away from sex—not when society passes out the pill and turns it's head!

What are you going to do? Will we stand and watch our young people led down the path to moral and spiritual destruction? Can we afford to say, "This is not our area of concern; let the schools and the state handle it"? But what can we do? Here are four positive suggestions, a start for you to think over:

1. *Help your children now.* Put some personal work behind the establishment of a healthy teen social program at your local church, or together with other like-minded churches. Volunteer to serve as a chaperone for two or three events during the year. It won't kill you; in fact, if you try it, you may like it. Go along to an overnight rally with the kids. Offer to spend a week as a counselor at the summer Bible conferences. Then, when your teenager, or your fellow Christian's teenager, feels the tug of social pressure toward sexual promiscuity, he'll have the smog-free atmosphere of his Christian friends for an alternative. After all, that's what the Bible says: "Flee also youthful lusts; but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart" (2 Timothy 2:22). Isn't it your business to help make this possible for your teenagers?

2. *Provide sex education now.* Establish a sex education program in the curriculum offered at your local church. Perhaps it could be an elective class offered at the grade level determined by your local Christian education committee, with attention given to the curriculum of the local school system. Our children need to learn God's "yes" about sex even as they hear their parents stress God's "no." Sex was God's idea. He commanded Adam and Eve to have sexual relations even before sin ever came along (Genesis 1:28). Sex is beautiful because God made it that and God says it is. We need to say it too, especially when our young people seem to hear only the Hugh Hefners of our society talking about the joys of sex. No more wonderful blessing of God was given to mankind from the beginning than that of the joys of sexual partnership in fellowship with God; too often we have taught our teenagers to think that God's gift

of sex is dirty. It's time we taught the whole truth.

3. *Work for a Christian school now.* Invest yourself, your children and your money in a Christian school. No one ever said this was easy to do, but can we fail to see the urgent need? If you are blessed to have one already in your area, support it with every positive reinforcement you can muster. Help it fulfill its calling to point your children to God's real presence in every step of every subject. A teacher cannot teach the truth about *any* subject until he has taught his pupils to begin with the God who created every subject. If God really made the world, then that is indeed the most basic fact of learning. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge" (Proverbs 1:7). Without that, your teenager will have great difficulty knowing anything as it truly is. Certainly he will find the most extreme difficulty, in viewing sex itself as the gift of God for the blessing of mankind.

4. *Talk it over now.* We parents seem to get tongue-tied when it comes to talking about sexual matters with our children. That in itself is one reason why the schools have begun sex education courses. Too often we are embarrassed, because of ignorance or because we were taught to feel that

way about sex. Yet the Word of God does have much more to say about this subject than many of us have really studied, and some time with God's Word is the first order of business.

Be ready to answer your children's questions—not with the whole encyclopedia of your sexual information—but the questions he really wants answers for at the time. And talk it over about the future, how to maintain a genuine walk with God in the face of the temptations that will come. Should college come before marriage, or after? Should it be a Christian college or some other? Where can Christian life-partners be found? How do you know which one to choose?

Most of all, though, parents need themselves to provide a living example of how God would have one man and one woman walk together in the fear of the Lord. A godly example may not be all that is needed by way of education in God's gift of sex; but certainly without that example the best course of instruction will be lacking the ingredient that God himself intended.

*The Rev. Rollin P. Keller is the pastor of Emmanuel Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Wilmington, Del.*

## Don't send your children to Sunday school!

FRANCIS E. MAHAFFY

The late J. Edgar Hoover, head of the FBI, frequently spoke about the importance of the Sunday school. Statistics showed that children who had been brought up in Sunday school were far less likely to become criminals than those who never went to Sunday school.

Perhaps you have seen the results of Sunday school in the lives of neighbor children. Their language is clean, they are nice children, they are the kind you're happy to have your own children associate with.

Or perhaps you've sent your children to Sunday school and have seen the improvement in their conduct. They come home enthusiastically singing "Jesus Loves Me." They bring home their Sunday school papers with the Bible stories and lessons for you to read.

Should you send your children to Sunday school? You may well decide to answer that affirmatively. Of course we should send our children to Sunday school!

### It may contradict your ideas

But just suppose that your own standards of behavior are not those taught in the Sunday school. Just suppose that you have adopted the "new morality"—anything goes, so long as it's done lovingly—and adultery, falsehood, even theft are OK in certain cases. If this is where your thinking is, you won't really want your children to go to Sunday school.

Think of the problems that would create. You surely see the need for consistency in the training of your children. You won't want them taught in a way diametrically opposed to your own. Your consistency is to be commended, though your set of standards is the wrong one.

Of course, if you are willing to hear and study the teachings of God's Word (and you may do that in Sunday school yourself), we believe we can show you what God's standards are. We believe we can demonstrate that your way will even fail to achieve the goals you are looking for in it.

### It may upset your equilibrium

Of course, most of you who are reading this are not "new moralists." You may be one of the typical upright Americans who abhor violence, adultery, drugs, lying, or theft, and who want your children to do the same. You may readily agree that you *should* send your children to Sunday school whether you actually go or not.

But should you? Did you ever stop to think that by sending your little ones to Sunday school you are building up a source of real conflict in their young minds? This conflict is quite basic, and it's much deeper than a difference over "life styles" or moralities. It may well set you and your children in opposite and hostile camps.

You see, I'm not talking about a Sunday school that teaches the pupils to be good and decent so they can go to heaven. That is what many typical decent Americans are teaching their children. It may be what you teach them at home, both in words and by example.

I'm speaking of a Sunday school that takes the Bible's teaching seriously. We believe that the Bible is God's infallible Word. We also seek to apply that teaching to all phases of our lives. And we try to teach its truth to all those who come to Sunday school.

The Bible teaches the reality of sin as a defiance of God. It teaches the utter impossibility of pleasing God or gaining heaven by a moral, upright life. In fact, the main message of the Bible, the gospel itself, is that



because man cannot work his way to heaven (since he is spiritually dead), he must see himself as hopeless in his own strength. But God sent his Son, Jesus Christ, into the world of sinners to do for us what we cannot do for ourselves. Christ came to pay the price for the sins of his own people: he died in our place that we might live with him.

Christ also sent forth his Holy Spirit to give new and living hearts to sinful men so they would turn from their sins unto God. The person with a new heart, one who is now spiritually alive, will come with genuine repentance and faith in Jesus Christ as God the Savior from sin and death.

### **It may change your child's life**

When God gives a person a new heart, he turns that individual toward himself. Being saved from the penalty of sin, joined to Christ as Savior and Lord, the believer's whole life is changed. Once that life was focused on earth; now it focuses on God. The true Christian, whether child or adult, lives for one purpose. That is to serve and to glorify God, as well as to enjoy God forever both here and in heaven.

So, if by the grace of God, your child hears the Word of God in Sunday school, there may be a change in his life. If the Holy Spirit uses that Word to wake up your child's heart, uses it to give your child a true knowledge of God in Christ, that child's whole life will be changed. This is precisely what we are aiming at in Sunday school; that is why we have Sunday school.

But by sending your child to Sunday school, to one where God's Word is truly believed and faithfully taught, you are giving those teachers a huge task to perform. For we are teaching your child that the one thing that really matters is God. God should be first in your child's life; all the child does should be directed toward God.

Our problem is that what we teach is contradicted in so many homes. For one hour on Sunday we teach him one thing. For the rest of the week he is learning something else, he is being told—openly or otherwise—that our teaching is wrong. That is what happens when the home, the parents, are not really persuaded that God is God and they are sinners in urgent need of help.

Who is likely to win in this sort of conflict? It may well be the home. The child soon sees that his parents do not believe what is taught at Sunday school. God is not put first in their lives. The parents may do all sorts of good and right things, working hard to provide for a pleasant home and good care of the children. And then, at the end of a week of hard work, what happens?

On the morning of the first day of the week, you may be tired. You sleep in, or plan a trip for rest and relaxing. You feel you deserve the break. But what about the church and Sunday school? That's all very good too, you think; but right now you need something else.

So many parents think of themselves as respectful of God, as reasonably decent and upright people. They want their children to think well of God and even to learn things about God. But they do not want to have God interfere too much with their lives. They have the wishful thought that somehow their decency and their avoidance of the worst sins will secure them a passport to heaven when they die. But for right now, the idea of a life in which God is truly first before all else—well, that's just too much!

*April, 1973*

### **Sunday school can be hazardous**

So let me urge you, *don't send your children to Sunday school!* Don't even send them to our particular Sunday school. Of course, if you do send them, we'll do our very best one hour a week to counteract all those other hours of contradictory teaching at home. And by God's grace (for it is only because God is gracious and powerful), some of these children will become true Christians whose lives are changed to focus on God.

Most of the rest of these children, when they become a little older, will drop out of Sunday school. Perhaps they'll realize then, even more clearly than you parents do now, the hypocrisy of giving lip-service to God while continuing to live as though God did not exist. If those older children are really logical in their thinking, they'll see that your ideals of being decent and upright citizens are really pointless apart from God. And like many other young people, more honest than their elders, more honestly mistaken in their thinking, they will turn to a purposeless, godless, life of drugs, vice, violence, and revolution. After all, if you can live as though God did not really exist, why shouldn't they really live consistently with that belief?

Don't send your children to Sunday school. It creates all sorts of problems and difficulties. It may cause friction at home. It may even lead the youngster to reject the hypocrisy he sees at home and to adopt a totally radical and amoral life. Sunday school can be hazardous if you send your children there.

Don't send them; *bring them!* Show them that you really want to learn of God yourself. Come to church with your whole family. Come together to hear and study the Word of God. Start reading the Bible for yourself and read it to your children. By the grace of God, you and your children may be given new hearts and new life by the Holy Spirit.

The Spirit uses the Bible as the tool to open your heart and to bring in new spiritual life. Once your heart is renewed, you will have the foundation for a truly happy home, a meaningful and fruitful life on earth, and eternal life with the Savior that you and your children have come to love and to serve.

Then no one will need to urge you to come to church or Sunday school. You would rather miss a meal, a few extra hours of sleep, or a drive into the country, than to miss a time of joy with God's people as they worship the one who loved them and hear his Word preached. Food for the spiritual life will then be more vital to you than food for the stomach, as important as that is.

Don't send your children to Sunday school! Come, and bring them with you, and together learn the grace of God who sent his Son into the world to save sinners.

# **Bring them**

*The Rev. Francis E. Mahaffy is a home missionary in Winthrop Harbor, Illinois, and into the surrounding northwestern suburbs of Chicago. This article was originally used as a calling tract in his work and is reproduced here with some editorial changes.*

# The Presbyterian Guardian

EDITOR  
JOHN J. MITCHELL

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## LETTERS

### The "grievous division" of 1937

In the January issue of the *Guardian*, in the editor's report on "Progress in OP/RP Merger Talks," there is reference to a *proposed* major change near

the beginning of the Preamble of the Basis of Union with respect to the "grievous division" that took place in 1937. The editor adds: "This division is characterized as having brought reproach to Christ's name and as being due to sin on both sides then" (p. 2, col. 1).

I am aware that revisions are at present only by way of proposal and, as the editor says, what he reported "is not the final decisions of the Joint Committee" (*ibid.*). But there is ground for concern that any reference in the Preamble to the division of 1937 should be framed in terms that fail to make frank acknowledgment of the sin of schism on the part of those who separated from the Presbyterian Church of America (now the Orthodox Presbyterian Church) in 1937.

It is always true, of course, that our most sacred actions and the actions of a church court are contaminated by sin.

No action of ours, however right and necessary it may be, whether it be individual or collective, is perfect. But the wrong of the division of 1937 may not be adequately assessed or acknowledged by saying that it was "due to sin on both sides then."

The General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church in 1937 refused to adopt resolutions that were being proposed. The defeat of those resolutions was not sinful; it was necessary for the honour of Christ's name, even though those responsible for the defeat were not sinless. The subsequent separation was in a radically different category, and no statement in the Preamble to the basis of union should gloss over the wrong involved. Let us be straight in our confessions. Christ's name is then honoured and the reproach of the past dealt with honorably.

John Murray  
Bonar Bridge, Scotland

### But I'm still for church union

General Assemblies are great, but the last Orthodox Presbyterian one (in May 1972) sank to a new low—especially during discussion of the proposed union of the OPC with the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod.

Very much present in the discussion was an activism which, if I mistake not, was impatient with deliberation and careful weighing of facts. For examples:

The problem of dispensationalism was found to be OK because "we had it too." The we-had-it-too notion arose because some Sunday school teacher was reported as using a Scofield Bible. When uninformed trends were cited or feared, the speaker was probably "self-righteous," so that was taken care of. Another answer to objections was that Matthew 18 (requiring that one go first to the offending brother) had not been followed. But Matthew 18 is not to be cited for silencing opposition to public offenses; if so, it would negate the public ministry of Jesus, the prophets, the apostles, and the Reformers.

A few men in the Assembly had not received by mail a copy of the proposed basis for union, and none were available at the Assembly. Once upon a time this would have been remedied, but now it bothered us not a bit.

We are "all one in Christ" anyway;

so just take off the tourniquet, was the slogan of the day. Certainly all Christians are one in Christ. Spiritual oneness has never been questioned. But we are considering oneness in the whole counsel of God; the question of authority must be faced; oneness of organization must be grappled with. That we are all members of the body of Christ does not mean that we are all going to come up—in this life—smelling like a rose. If organic oneness alone is considered, glorious as that is, then why did we need the Protestant Reformation or the painful separation of 1936?

Then there was the alleged parallel with the church of Corinth that one speaker set forth. In Corinth we have a church so carnal, yet it was still called a church. Well, in the context of church mergers, Corinth should be kept in mind—to explode any "holier than thou" attitude. But it always helps to keep the record straight. During the brief history of the OPC many have left us. I think it could be said that one reason for the exodus was that the church was too carnal. Perhaps we needed more tourniquets.

I firmly believe that those who are not afraid to think through the subject of Christian liberty of conscience have come to the Kingdom for such a time as this. Surely this present-day generation will not be greatly moved by a church that proclaims

"We don't smoke, we don't chew;  
"We don't go with girls that do."

Many sincere evangelicals have not hesitated to place the whole church under the conscience of the weaker brother. This the Word of God does not do. Tender and loving must be our attitude toward the weaker brother; but God alone is Lord of the conscience. We must hold high the teaching of Christian liberty, because it involves the finality and sufficiency of God's Word. And that is the truth without which our world will die the death.

To say that in the division of 1937 we both sinned is true in a sense. But this may deceive. Good men left the OPC in 1937 because the General Assembly would not add to our scriptural standards. That we need to repent goes without saying. But how can that stand against adding to the standards be numbered among our sins?

Then in the General Assembly of 1947, we were confronted with Scripture texts on the blackboard for two days. The light was clear: God offered the gospel sincerely to all men, not just to the elect. Good men left us after that Assembly, some of them now in the RPC/ES. But if offering the gospel sincerely to all men is a sin, then I must be placed on record as being an unrepentant sinner. But then, glory be, I think most Reformed Presbyterians would agree with me.

But, I'm still for church union.

Robert K. Churchill  
Sonora, California

## Welcome to a goodly heritage

As a part of the projected union with the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod, the Orthodox Presbyterian Church will be gaining a share in a glorious tradition. For over three centuries, since the days of the Scottish covenants of 1638 and 1643, Reformed Presbyterianism has stood unequivocally for "the crown rights and royal prerogatives of the Lord Jesus Christ." So it is with some concern that we read the suggestion of the *Guardian* editor (in the January issue, p. 2) that in the united church the name Reformed Presbyterian be displaced by something fresh. Let me urge its retention, for the following reasons.

Reformed Presbyterianism is the only historic movement in the new world that has maintained an undiminished loyalty to the faith of Calvin and Knox. Since the founding of the Reformed Presbytery of America in 1774, it has been distinguished, both in its doctrinal standards (e.g., *Reformation Principles Exhibited* 1806) and its corporate life, by commitment to: the inerrancy of Scripture as its basis for theology; discipline and purity in its ecclesiology; theocratic ideals for society; the majesty of God in public worship; and a vital hope for the coming of our Lord's kingdom eschatologically—yet in this last area stressing also a tolerance for legitimate differences of interpretation within the Reformed faith. (Note how the former Evangelical Presbyterian Church relinquished its explicitly premillennial version of the Westminster Larger Catechism when it united with the RPs in 1965.) [Illustrations of these covenanting distinctives appear in Dr. J. B. Payne's series of five articles in the current R.P. *Mandate*—vol. 107, for those interested in tradition!]

Again, as a matter of faithfulness, there is need to be fair to the members of the former Reformed Presbyterian Church, General Synod, who entered the union in 1965 understanding that the RP title was to be preserved.

The *Guardian's* editor explained his hesitancy over "Reformed Presbyterian" because "it is already the name used by the Covenanters." But while this is no time to revive the issues of that regrettable division in 1883, it is a matter of historical record that it was the "Old Side" Covenanters who left the General Synod and it was the

"New Side" that preserved the succession of the moderators and stated clerks, the agencies, the records, and the name "Reformed Presbyterian Church, General Synod." In fact, in anticipation of the bicentennial celebrations next year, it has been my privilege, for the RP Historical Committee, to draw up the complete list of moderators and synod meetings, from John Cuthbertson at Paxtang (Harrisburg), Penna., on March 10, 1774, down through Marion D. Barnes, elected at the 150th General Synod (RPC/ES), Harvey Cedars, N.J., in 1972. The name, therefore, can be shared—to say the least—as it has been for the last 140 years! Indeed, 1974 can be made doubly significant, if it marks not simply an event in Pennsylvania years ago, but simultaneously the uniting of the OP and RP testimony for the advancement of the distinctives of the covenanted church for years ahead.

Further, even as our "Old Side" brethren will be joining in the bicentennial, it is our prayer that the entire breach may soon be healed. Fresh breezes are already blowing; and, for the sake of such anticipated union, we have a continuing stake in the Reformed Presbyterian name and heritage.

Finally, it is this same tradition that can draw us together with our British RP brethren in bearing testimony to the Westminster Standards. The first international convention of RP churches was held in 1896, and the second in 1938. Correspondence is already under way with the stated clerks of the Reformed Presbyterian Churches of Scotland and Ireland looking forward another 42 years to 1980 (D.v.), which marks the tricentennial of the martyrdom of Cameron for a united *Reformed Presbyterian Church*—O.P., R.P., and (we trust) Old Side R.P.—to join in chartering jets for a third gathering in Scotland for the advancement of "Christ's crown and covenant." Personally, I am thrilled to be a part of this tradition. "The lines have fallen unto me in pleasant places; yes, I have a goodly heritage" (Psalm 16:8). Now, Welcome!

J. Barton Payne, professor  
Covenant Theological Seminary  
St. Louis, Missouri

In addition to this rather moving

plea for the name "Reformed Presbyterian" as the name of a united church including the present Orthodox Presbyterian and Reformed Presbyterian (Evangelical Synod) churches, we also received the following suggestions:

"United Evangelical Presbyterian Church" —J. G., Rochester, N.Y.

"Evangelical Presbyterian Church" —M. B., Geneva College

"Reformed," either as "Reformed Presbyterian" or "Presbyterian Reformed" or "Presbyterian and Reformed Church" —J. P., Bel Air, Md.

The *Guardian's* editor can certainly appreciate the strong appeal of the name "Reformed Presbyterian." Historically, "Reformed" does not refer so much to the Reformed faith, but to the fact that it originated in a reformed presbytery in Scotland, one that chose to be faithful to the great Scottish covenants (whence the name "Covenanters") that pledged that nation to the doctrines of the Westminster Standards. Any true Presbyterian should appreciate that.

On the other hand, there are other equally strong historical traditions within those who now make up the membership of both the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod. In 1936, those who were forced to leave the old Presbyterian Church, U.S.A., chose the name "Presbyterian Church of America" to express their conviction that they were in fact "the spiritual succession" of the old church. And that church dates its American founding to 1729, and throughout its history there has always been at least a remnant witness to the doctrines and practices of the Reformed faith.

Since the United Presbyterian Church already has a new confession, and the Presbyterian Church, U.S. is working on one, it might be helpful to call the merged OP-RP Church the "Westminster Presbyterian Church," and thus lay claim to a faithful adherence to that confession. But so many local congregations already use that name that it would create some confusion there. If "Reformed Presbyterian" is the name finally chosen, this descendant of the Covenanters will have no objection; it is a good name and if the "other" Reformed Presbyterians can unite in one body under that banner, the name could be a valuable witness to the doctrines of sovereign grace in our time. —J. J. M.

# The Word of God and the AACS

## a reply to Professor Zylstra

JOHN M. FRAME

First, I wish to express my sincere thanks to Dr. Bernard Zylstra for his article "The Word of God, the Bible, and the AACS" (in the March issue of the *Guardian*). Although I find much with which to disagree in that article (as will be evident below), I am pleased with its constructive spirit and with its potential value as a contribution to a continuing dialogue. Although I have been making rather serious criticisms of the AACS for about four or five years now [among others, see "The Word of God in the Cosmological Philosophy" in the October and November issues of the *Guardian*], Dr. Zylstra is the first adherent of that movement, to my knowledge, who has given my arguments any kind of serious scrutiny.

It is generally a breakdown of communication that turns brotherly disagreement into heresy hunting. The most distinctive characteristic of a heretic is his *unteachableness*, his unwillingness to participate in serious discussion with brethren of a different mind on an issue. When dialogue breaks down, our only recourse is to *warn* the church about the errors that concern us. And that means heresy hunting; that means polemics. It is much better to discuss than to polemicize any day. And if Dr. Zylstra's article opens up the channels of brotherly communication, I can only praise God.

Now a few comments on the content of Dr. Zylstra's article:

### 1. The "Third Category"

The following quote from Dr. Zylstra's article pinpoints one of the crucial issues:

In this booklet [*The Amsterdam Philosophy: a Preliminary Critique*; Harmony Press, 1972] Frame asks the fundamental question: What is the relation of law to God? Before he answers this question he formulates the frame of reference within which the answer can be given: "The Scriptures teach that God is creator, the world is his creature, and that there is nothing in between, no third category" (p. 29). Here, we submit, Frame departs from the teaching of the Bible, which clearly posits a "third category," namely the Creator's law for creation—the statutes, ordinances, and words that creatures must obey and do. The absence of this "third category" in Frame's conception makes it extremely difficult for him to understand the Bible on this score. . . .

It seems that the issue is pretty clear-cut: Zylstra says there is a "third category"; Frame says there is none. But perhaps we need to be clearer on what we mean by "category."

Now there is a sense in which you can have as many "categories" as you like—for instance: God, the world, God's law, God's love, God's justice, God's eternity, etc., etc. None of these phrases is synonymous with another; each

says something a little "different." Each, therefore, might be a "category" all its own; thus, you might have nine, twelve, twenty-five or a hundred and two "categories" if you like.

Obviously, however, I wasn't saying there are two categories in *that* sense of category. In my usage, "two categories" does *not* mean "two non-synonymous designations." In what sense, then, *did* I say there were only two? Simply in the sense that "creator" and "creature" exhaust the whole of all that is. *Everything* is either creator or creature. By Jesus Christ *all* things were created, in heaven and earth (Colossians 1:16f.). Christ created *all* things except himself. All things are *creative* or *created*; there is nothing outside these categories.

Many heresies in the history of the church have tried to posit some intermediary between God and his creation. It seemed to them that God could not create or redeem the world directly, that there must be some "link". The Gnostics had a great ladder of mediators between God and man. None of them were exactly divine, but none of them were exactly creatures either. The Arians thought that Christ was such a mediator—neither fully divine nor really a creature.

In contrast with these heretical views, the Bible boldly proclaims that there is only *one* mediator between God and man. And that mediator, rather than being some half-divine and half-creature "link" between God and creation, is fully God and fully man—both creator *and* creature. In Scripture, God does not need some "third category" in order to create, redeem and govern; he comes into *direct contact* with his world. He speaks *clearly* to his people, acts with direct and personal *power*. Any other view removes God from his world and calls in question the clarity of his revelation and the personal power of his sovereignty.

Now what about "law"? Is law creator or creature? Well, that's easy, isn't it? Law is that word of God by which all things were made (Genesis 1:3; Psalm 33:6; John 1:1-3; Hebrews 11:3; 2 Peter 3:5). The law has divine attributes (Psalm 19:4-9; 119:89, 160; etc.). To obey the law is to obey God; to disobey the law is to disobey God. God's law, God's Word, is God himself (John 1:1).<sup>1</sup> The law is divine in the same way God's justice, love, grace, eternity are divine. In fact, in some mysterious way, the divinity of the Word *is* the divinity of the Son of God himself (John 1:1ff.).

To make the law a "third category" in Dr. Zylstra's sense is to place upon that law an unbiblically low estimate. To make the law a "third category" in this way is to place a mediator between God and man other than the one mediator who is *fully* divine and *fully* human.

### 2. The Word as "Linguistic Communication"

I have said that "word of God" in the Bible may be understood as a kind of "linguistic communication." Professor Zylstra thinks that this is a "reductionist" view. I must say I am quite baffled by this.

What is a "word"? A word is a "linguistic communication"! "Word" and "linguistic communication" are *synonyms*; in fact they are so closely synonymous that to define one in terms of the other doesn't tell you very much. If you don't know what a word is, you aren't likely to know what a "linguistic communication" is either!

I never honestly thought I was saying anything momentous in defining the word of God "linguistically"! I never thought I was saying anything controversial, let alone offering a "reductionist" view. Now of course I know that God's "word" is more than human language; that is to say, God's language is not our language. But the Bible presents God's language as *language*—as *word*. Can we find any *better* way to talk about it?<sup>2</sup>

Or put it this way: How, in Dr. Zylstra's view, is God's word *more* than "language"? (I.e., in what way is "God's word" more than "God's language"?) That seems a bit like asking in what way Peter is more than Cephas.

But Dr. Zylstra has several answers. At one point, by what is at best a bizarre exegesis, he suggests that "word" refers to manna and clothing in Matthew 4:4 and Deuteronomy 8:3. I confess I find it rather difficult to take such a suggestion seriously.

However, his most serious answer to our question runs as follows: The word is more than language because it is God's *power*, God's *decree* that governs and upholds all things. God's word is power, and therefore it is more than language. Here we must make some observations: (a) Language is powerful; it accomplishes great things in the world. The president declares war, thousands are killed. Scripture abounds in references to the power of language: cf. Genesis 11:6; Romans 1:16; James 3:1-8. One cannot argue that the word is "power, and therefore more than language," for language itself is a power.

(b) The power of God's word is presented in Scripture as the power of divine *language*. God is the great king who *speaks* and his subjects *obey* (Psalm 33:9; 147:15; 148:5-8; etc.). Scripture never suggests that we must think of God's decree as something supra-linguistic. It is more than *man's* language, to be sure; but (again) Scripture persists in calling it language, and I can see no reason to reject that scriptural usage.

But *why* does Scripture so regularly speak of God's power as a kind of language? Obviously, some will insist, this usage is metaphorical; God does not have a mouth, and his speech need not be limited to the utterance of sounds. Why, then, is the "linguistic" terminology so important?

It is important (and I wish this point were acknowledged occasionally in the AACS literature) because the power of God is never a *blind* power. It is never a raw force. In all situations it reflects God's *wisdom* and *understanding*. Thus his power (like language!) is a *revelation* of his mind. God's word, that is, is not *merely* "power"; it is also *meaning*. It is interpretation, communication, revelation; it is *language*. God's power does not come upon us as an ineffable, indescribable, unanalyzable "experience." Rather, it clearly *reveals* God to us (Romans 1:20) so that we *know* God and *know* his requirements (Romans 1:32). This is why God's word is a *word*: it is not merely power, it is powerful *language*. Dr. Zylstra's argument—"power, therefore more than language"—confuses this important biblical truth.

### 3. "Word" and "Bible"

It shouldn't be necessary to make the following point, but

for some reason our AACS brethren keep expecting us to make it again and again. Let me say as clearly as possible that I do *not* "simply" identify "word of God" and "Bible." I do not "reduce" "word of God" to "Bible."

The Bible is a particular utterance of the word of God, but it is not the only such utterance. Many words of God are not found in the Bible. Jesus said many things that are not recorded in Scripture; God says many things to the sun, moon and stars that are not recorded in Scripture; the persons of the Trinity speak to one another in eternal communication, a communication that no human language not even Scripture can exhaust.

I have never "reduced" the word to Scripture in Zylstra's sense, nor has Norman Shepherd, nor has any other critic of the AACS so far as I know. We do, however, want to insist on certain important *continuities* between "word" and "Bible," such as: (a) The words of the Bible *are* words of God, not merely words of men. (b) Therefore the words of the Bible are *Law* for us; they are not merely (as is suggested in some AACS literature) "applications" of God's law to a particular cultural situation. (c) Scripture needs not be supplemented by other divine commandments; it contains all that we need to be "complete, thoroughly furnished unto every good work" (2 Timothy 3:17). (Again, it is not clear to me that the AACS enthusiasts recognize this crucial scriptural principle.) (d) Because it is the word of God, Scripture is self-interpreting and self-attesting; we do not need a philosophical system to tell what it is about. (e) Because it is the word of God, *all* of Scripture (not merely the "basic motives") must be studied and applied to *all* areas of human life.

To me these "continuities" between word and Bible are terribly important. And in my view, the AACS witness to these continuities is at best unclear. Therefore, when I write about Dooyeweerd, the AACS, etc., I generally focus on these "continuities." Perhaps, therefore, I have given some the impression that I "reduce" the word to Scripture in Dr. Zylstra's sense. I hope Dr. Zylstra and his colleagues will accept my word that I don't *intend* any such "reductionism." At the same time I would like to have some clear testimony from them that they affirm the "continuities" about which I am so concerned.

The issues between us are still quite large. I trust, however, that we are coming to understand one another better. Thank you again, Dr. Zylstra, for speaking to the central questions.

<sup>1</sup>True, John 1:1 also asserts a *distinction* between the Word and God, but not such a distinction as to compromise the deity of the Word. Such unity and distinction brings us to the heart of the mystery of the Trinity; it does not require (as Gnostics and Arians supposed) that the Word be something less than God.

<sup>2</sup>Incidentally, let me clear up a minor misunderstanding at this point: I have defined God's word as "God's linguistic communication." I have never defined it (as Dr. Zylstra seems to think at one point in his paper) as "God's linguistic communication *to man*." Obviously, on a scriptural view, God's word is not addressed solely to *man*.

*John Frame is a professor of systematic theology at Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia. Bernard Zylstra is a professor of political theory at the Institute for Christian Studies in Toronto.*

# Determining controversies of faith

DONALD J. DUFF

*It belongeth to synods and councils ministerially to determine controversies of faith, and cases of conscience; . . . which decrees and determinations, if consonant with the word of God, are to be received with reverence and submission . . . as being an ordinance of God, appointed thereunto in his word* (Westminster Confession of Faith, XXXI, III).

The question, though, is how long is this supposed to take?

## The "Sabbath Question" — a long history

The "Sabbath Question" has been before the Orthodox Presbyterian Church for over nine years. It started at a meeting of the Presbytery of Wisconsin (now the Presbytery of the Midwest) in October 1963. One of the churches sought advice from the presbytery concerning the propriety of receiving into communicant church membership a man who operated a delicatessen on Sunday. In the discussion of the matter at least one minister in the presbytery declared that this was no sufficient reason to refuse the man church membership.

In subsequent meetings of the presbytery the question of the Sabbath continued to be discussed. Finally, in September 1965, the presbytery elected a special committee to consider these questions:

1. In view of the second ordination vow [requiring acceptance of the Confession and Catechisms], are the teaching and ruling elders required to accept the teaching of the Confession of Faith and Catechisms regarding the Christian Sabbath?

2. In view of the fourth question asked of candidates for communicant church membership [requiring assent to church discipline in doctrine and life], are such members required to accept the teaching of our Standards regarding the Christian Sabbath?

A year later, this special committee recommended that "any minister in the Presbytery of Wisconsin who takes exception to the basic teaching of the Westminster Standards on the Christian Sabbath shall be advised to express his exceptions in writing to the moderator, and the moderator is authorized and empowered to appoint a committee of three to evaluate such exceptions. . . ." The presbytery adopted this recommendation in September 1966.

## A request to the Assembly denied

Subsequently, one of the ministers of the presbytery wrote a paper in which he pointed out where his view of this subject conflicted with that of the Westminster Standards. The committee to evaluate, reporting in March 1968, recommended that "the Presbytery recognize the position of [the minister] as a position which our ministers and members may freely adopt and hold."

The presbytery rejected a motion that would have expressed disapproval of this minister's views on the Lord's Day, "because it constitutes a serious departure from the teaching of the Westminster Standards on this subject." Not being able to make up its mind, the presbytery overtured the 1968 General Assembly "to take steps to evaluate the teachings of the Westminster Standards concerning the Sabbath with the purpose of defining the nature of subscription to the standards on this matter."

But the Assembly refused to take up the question and informed the presbytery that "the Assembly does not deem it advisable, apart from appeal from a decision by the Presbytery, to render a decision such as has been requested." In other words, the presbytery was being advised that such a question should be brought to the Assembly by way of formal judicial procedure.

Thus, in September 1968, the Rev. George W. Marston brought formal charges and specifications against the minister whose views differed from those of the Westminster Standards. This was an attempt to initiate a formal judicial process that could result in a final decision. The presbytery began a preliminary investigation to determine whether such a judicial process was warranted.

## The non-actions of the presbytery

Later that month, the presbytery was faced with a motion that "the proof of the charges and specifications brought by Mr. Marston against [the dissenting minister] *would not show* the commission of an offense" [emphasis added]. (In order to proceed with judicial process it is necessary to decide if an error in doctrine or life may have occurred, if the case can be proved. If what is being charged is not itself an error, then the process cannot be begun at all.) This negative motion lost in a tie vote. A positive motion, that the charges and specification "*would show* the commission of an offense", also lost in a tie.

In November 1968, Mr. Marston and four other members of the presbytery presented a complaint against the presbytery for its failure to act. In answer to the complaint, the presbytery determined to sustain "the previous action of the Presbytery." Just what that action was understood to be is hard to say in light of the two lost motions. Strictly speaking, the presbytery failed to act in one way or the other.

Failing to receive any satisfaction in the presbytery, the complainants forwarded their complaint against the presbytery to the 1969 General Assembly. This Assembly, after lengthy debate on various aspects of the question, found itself unable to decide whether to deny or to sustain the complaint. Instead, it set up a committee "to study the extent to which the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms faithfully reflect the Scripture teaching in regard to the Fourth Commandment," and "to act as a board of inquiry with regard to the matters concerning this complaint."

In 1970, the Committee on Sabbath Matters reported that it needed more time to complete its assignment. (Meanwhile, the minister whose views were in question had transferred to another denomination.) Again in 1971, the committee requested a further extension of time to deal with problems growing out of divergent views within the committee. Finally, at the Thirty-ninth General Assembly in 1972, the committee presented its completed report along with two minority reports.

## Further postponement by the Assembly

This 1972 Assembly spent hours in debating budget matters and fiscal affairs. But when the report of the Sabbath Committee came up, despite all the many delays it had suffered already, the Assembly apparently felt no urgency about the

**Greater Los Angeles area** — The annual Reformed Bible Conference was held in various local churches from March 3 through March 11. Principal speaker was Dr. Kenneth G. Smith, Reformed Presbyterian (Covenant) missionary on the island of Cyprus. Dr. Smith's talks were on the theme, "How to Tell Others." The Reformed Bible Conference is sponsored jointly by Orthodox Presbyterian, Reformed Presbyterian — Evangelical Synod, and Reformed Presbyterian — Covenant churches in the Los Angeles area.

**Silver Spring, Md.** — Knox Church was privileged to have the Rev. Charles W. Anderson, professor at Covenant College, for a series of messages on "Christ's Lordship Made Visible," March 11-14, 1973. On Saturday, March 10, men from several Orthodox and Reformed Presbyterian congregations met together for fellowship and heard Chuck Anderson speak on *Koinonia* (i.e., "fellowship"). Mr. Anderson is a professor of Bible at the college.

matter. Though the minister in question had left the denomination, yet there were five members of the church who had been waiting three years for an answer to their complaint. Moreover, a presbytery was charged with a delinquency and, according to the recommendation of the Sabbath Committee, that presbytery should be censured for its failure to act.

Still, perhaps tired out by the hours of debate that had already taken place, and unwilling to tackle so large a question of creedal importance, the Assembly determined to postpone the matter one more year. It did, however, agree to place it on the docket for the Fortieth General Assembly early enough to ensure its getting a fair hearing.

Thus a matter of real substance, proposed in the proper way according to the instructions of the General Assembly, and waiting for almost ten years for final decision, remains unsolved—and this in a church that prides itself on its concern for pure doctrine and for upholding a creedal position.

What can be learned from this long history? No doubt there are many lessons that might be noted, lessons for presbyteries confronted with sticky questions and lessons for the General Assembly also. Whatever these may be, let us hope the matter of the Sabbath will not once again be slighted. Rather, let all the commissioners to the Fortieth General Assembly come prepared to deal with this matter carefully and deliberately in the light of God's Word.

After all, the basic question is what does the Scripture teach. May the whole church pray that the Lord will grant wisdom and determination to bring this question to a decisive conclusion, for the benefit of the church of Christ and the glory of our sovereign God.

*The Rev. Donald J. Duff is the pastor of Bethel Orthodox Presbyterian Church, Grand Junction, Colorado. He was a member of the Presbytery of Wisconsin at the time the "Sabbath Question" first arose. [The report of the Sabbath Committee was available in the Agenda booklet for the 1972 General Assembly and will be included again in the 1973 Agenda.]*

## Modesto Church dedicates first building

May E. Morrow

October 22, 1972 was a doxology occasion for the First Orthodox Presbyterian Church of Modesto, California, when their new auditorium was dedicated. The Rev. Thomas S. Champness, pastor, presided.

Among those taking part were the Rev. Robert K. Churchill of Sonora; Mr. Clyde Dunlap, Modesto City councilman; the Rev. Roy Blakeley, bringing a welcome from neighboring churches; Mr. Clarence den Dulk for the Committee on Home Missions; and the Rev. Henry W. Coray in behalf of the presbytery. The special message was brought by the Rev. Douglas Neff, pastor of the Grace Community Church in San Jose.

The Rev. Jacob Weersing, minister-emeritus of the Christian Reformed Church, pronounced the benediction. This man of God, now in his nineties, ministered to the Modesto group during its infancy and did much to encourage its growth.

The Modesto group began with

three families under the leadership of a Baptist pastor, William Hodge. In September 1962 this nucleus joined with three other families, meeting for worship in a hotel and in 1972 moving to the Odd Fellows Temple. Toward the end of 1963 the Rev. Thomas S. Champness was called as home missionary and pastor. In July 1964 the first members were officially received. The first members of session were ordained in February 1966.

Construction was begun in October 1971, in an arrangement with the Committee on Home Missions and Church Extension. Much credit is due to the men and women whom "the Spirit made willing" that labored after a full day of work to complete portions of the new building. Indeed, "to God be the glory, great things He hath done!"

*Miss May Morrow is an elect lady who grew up in the Covenant Church and is now a member of the Modesto congregation.*

## KNOLLWOOD PRESBYTERIAN LODGE

**DATES:** June 30 — August 31, 1973

**SPECIAL EMPHASIS WEEKS:**

July 7 — 13: Bible Conference

Prof. Harvie M. Conn, speaker

August 4 — 11: Ministers' Conference

Dr. J. Barton Payne, and

Dr. Richard B. Gaffin, speakers

**RATES:**

Adults: \$60 per week or \$10 per day

Children (11 years or under):

\$35 per week or \$6 per day

(Prices include breakfast, lunch, dinner; linens and towels; private bath in each suite.)

A log cabin efficiency apartment, at reduced rates, is available; inquiries invited.

**INFORMATION, RESERVATIONS:** Write:

**Knollwood Presbyterian Lodge**

**Route 2**

**Birchwood, Wisconsin 54817**

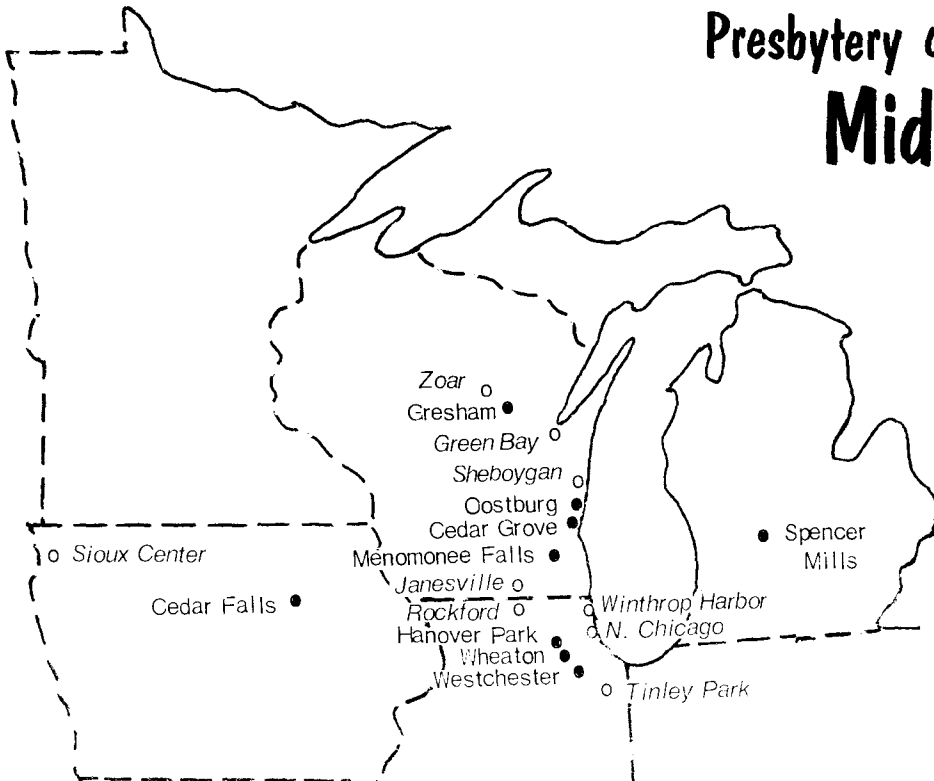
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## Presbytery of Midwest on the Move



**Rockford, Ill., Janesville, Wisc. —** Mr. Ken Bosgraf, brother of the Rev. James L. Bosgraf of Hanover Park, has volunteered to supply two new outpost works for the Committee on Church Extension of the Presbytery of the Midwest. He is meeting with a group of six to eight families in Rockford and another group in Janesville. Mr. Bosgraf's service relieves the heavy load on the Rev. Francis E. Mahaffy who had been driving some 230 miles each Sunday to serve the Janesville group and his own congregation in Winthrop Harbor, Ill.

**Sheboygan, Wisc. —** A new chapel work was begun here on January 28 when twenty-seven people gathered in a home for worship. The group is now meeting in the Cooper Elementary School, 20th and Cooper Streets, and attendance has passed the fifty mark. The new work is under the supervision of Bethel Church in Oostburg, with the cooperation of Calvary Church in Cedar Grove.

**Tinley Park, Ill. —** Encouraging progress has been seen here since the arrival of the Rev. Leslie A. Dunn as home missionary-pastor. The group is now formally a branch chapel of the Westminster Church of Westchester, Ill. Bible classes and house visitation by chapel members is extending the chapel's outreach into the community.

**Cedar Falls, Iowa —** Christ Church of Cedarloo is rejoicing in the presence of its new pastor, the Rev. George W. Hall. Mr. Hall had been pastor of Calvary Church in Middletown, Pa., and then served as a counselor in a state correctional institution in Pittsburgh. Mr. Hall and his wife Kay, with their eight children, will be living at 3214 Dallas Drive, Cedar Falls, IA 50613.

**Westchester, Ill. —** The Westminster Church dedicated its new building on February 25. The message was brought by the Rev. Lawrence R. Eyres, pastor in Dayton, Ohio, and first pastor of the Westminster congregation. Others participating in the service were former pastors, the Rev. Glenn Black and the Rev. Wm. Harlee Bordeaux. Elders Edward Klokow and Guy Lundvall also took part. Special music was provided by the choir and men's chorus of Bethel Church, Oostburg, Wisc. The Rev. Ivan J. De Master, pastor of the Westminster Church, presided at the service of dedication.

