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dialogue

December 10, 1971



Comment

This month's lead story on the role of women in the Christian Reformed church presents an ideal moment for us to focus on the role of women at Calvin College.

Calvin College is perpetuating the Christian Reformed "kept woman" syndrome. Through written policies and subtle, unwritten pressures, Calvin keeps its women in place. American society is, by tradition and practice, male dominated; the Christian Reformed church goes one step further by asserting Biblical grounds for male domination. It is a woman's divinely-ordained role to be second to man, to be a help-meet rather than a competitor, to be silent lest she offend.

To the matriculating Christian high school woman, Calvin College is not only the place where she can "come alive" but also simultaneously find her Christian Reformed mate. While Knollcrest "family style" aptly initiates the mixture of the sexes, dorm policies judiciously control the circumstances of the mixture, assuring concerned parents that their daughters rest in protecting hands. The hours system, while admittedly sexually discriminatory, enables the weaker sex to defer more difficult decisions to the stronger and more knowledgeable administration. Besides, who knows how many virtuous women may otherwise fall victim to the predatory male?

A college education is apparently less important to a woman than it is to a man. Why else would so many women drop out after finding their mate in order to put him through school? Why else would Calvin not offer women the same stimulus and encouragement that it offers men? Is this an effect of woman's curse, a product of society's psychological tailorings, or a result of subtle manipulations on the part of the college? The Christian Reformed church has typically implied the first, and the college has concurred by failing to force women out of the "kept woman" syndrome. Whereas many departments select men as prime graduate school and professional potential, rare indeed is the woman who is "groomed" for further post-graduate education. Women are not, with the same energy, counseled to enter new fields, and it is considered wonderfully strange when one does show such interests.

Does the fact that a preponderance of Calvin College women are in education programs suggest that the typical Calvin College woman encounters few alternatives? According to the Registrar's *Opening Fall Report: October, 1971*, thirty-four

percent of all Calvin women are in elementary education; including secondary education the figure approaches forty-four percent. By the time they are seniors, most women have narrowed down their alternatives to just one: seventy-eight percent of all senior women are in education. Admittedly these statistics demand further interpretation; we must remember that, by their senior year, many women have transferred to pursue specialized studies elsewhere. However, the field of education is presently overcrowded, especially for women. Because it fulfills her maternal and service instincts and grants her (at least until recently) a fair measure of economic security until, and for a while after, she gets married, teaching seems to have traditionally borne the stamp of the ideal job for a woman.

But returning to the Registrar's statistics, only a handful of women, and of these most are freshmen, are enrolled in pre-professional courses. And it is in the professions of medicine, law, and business that women are today most needed and can be of greatest service to society and to their own sex.

Does the college implicitly assume that a woman's highest calling is not for her to develop her own unique potential in order to achieve a vocation of her own? Is her highest calling, as the church has traditionally recorded it, to be a wife and mother? Certainly many women entering educational fields are developing their unique potential; but would not many women prefer to have entered, or at least to have encountered a viable choice to have entered, one of those fields in the considerably larger array of professions presently open to men? In the past the church and society have selectively limited a woman's vocational choices. The college is cooperating by either consciously or unconsciously restricting alternatives to women, and the result is that most of them are funneled through the education department. Is not the enterprise of *liberating* students more appropriate to a liberal arts college than the enterprise of restricting them?

These attitudes and restrictions regarding the role of women students at Calvin are reflected and reinforced by Calvin's policy, written and unwritten, toward its women faculty members. Calvin's faculty numbers 183 members; only twenty-four of them are women. Until only a few years ago, married women were not allowed faculty status; and even today if a husband and wife are both

faculty members, only the husband enjoys faculty status. Ostensibly, this policy exists to preclude embarrassing family situations at faculty meetings in which husband and wife might disagree on voting issues. This same consideration has apparently never been applied to the numerous brother-brother and father-son relationships on the faculty. Nonetheless, the policy also teaches faculty wives to be submissive to their faculty husbands.

More obtrusive, however, is that women faculty enjoy membership on no important college committees. Those committees which are powerful in determining college policy are entirely male-dominated. Through its committee assignments, the college encourages its women faculty to fulfil their maternal role by doing the college's housekeeping. Faculty committees having women members are: Counseling and Guidance, All-campus Discipline Committee, Residence Halls Appellate Council, Residence Halls Judiciaries, Faculty Social and Special Academic Activities Committee, Film Arts Council, Honors Program Committee, and Student Religious Activities Committee. The last three committees named certainly involve creative work beyond mere housekeeping, but even these are still far removed from the real power at Calvin, such as that wielded by the Educational Policy Committee, Faculty Organization Study Committee, and Professional Status Committee. Is this sexual discrimination found festering even within the faculty of Calvin College appropriate to the educational profession?

Considering the changing attitudes toward women today and considering the many roles for which women are equally capable and to which they are equally entitled, it is imperative that the college and the Christian Reformed Church re-evaluate their positions regarding women; both the college and the church must join the vanguard of the movement to instate women as full-fledged members in the church, in the college, and in society.



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Rose - colored Revolution

by Carl Strikwerda

Without Marx or Jesus: The New American Revolution Has Begun, by Jean Francois Revel; Doubleday and Company, 1971.

Revel's book presents a rather complicated problem for Americans, especially for the more radical of the species. The author's almost embarrassing glorification of present-day America is based, perplexingly, on two factors: the very people within our society who are pressing most for change, and the technology and liberalism the dissenters so often attack. As an Americanophile, therefore, Revel is a strange but challenging ally for either the radicals or their more traditionally-minded moderate brethren. Both camps might have something to learn from the French author.

Unfortunately, Revel bases his thesis on rather shaky grounds. He is at best in his critique of why none of the usually accepted founts of revolution — established Communism, the Third World, the Western European left — can be the originator of what he calls the second world revolution. (His subtitle is a poor choice of words for what he really means.)

Revel argues that traditional European socialism is bankrupt as a revolutionary ideology. Its analysis of society no long holds (in Western Europe, too, the workers are middle class, he says) and its adherents have become so hidebound that they have lost any sense of *realpolitik*.

The dream of leftists that some kind of global revolution will arise out of the underdeveloped nations and serve as a model for the modernized countries is just that, says Revel, a dream. Can one reasonably believe that "Castroism, say, can infect West Germany or Britain?"

As far as traditional Communism is concerned, Revel's belief that the "new society" must rest on a modern technological base relegates Russia and China and their satellites to the role of non-revolutionary societies. Further, Revel indicts any society that believes that "there can be progress in socialism without equal progress in human freedom, particularly in freedom of expression."

It is only in America, then, that Revel sees a possibility of a truly radical revolution. He bases this on the strength of liberal democracy in the United States, the Bill of Rights, the judicial system, the electoral process and the technological base for what he calls "cultural diversity."

At this point the thrust begins to weaken. It is difficult to see any coherent relationship between the rejection of Haynesworth and Carswell by the Senate and the antics of the yippies, even though Revel believes that the two taken together are politically significant.

In addition, Revel fails to prove that radical youth's rejection of technology is not at root a near-fatal rejection of the very industrial base he feels is necessary for the "new society" to be free to be "culturally diverse."

Revel is too much of an outsider to realize the political irrelevancy of the freak movement in itself. If drugs and the counter-culture mean anything for society as a whole, it is more as a symbol of the depth and intensity of dissent in America than as potent political forces themselves.

This can best be shown, I think, by relating an incident with a more or less counter-culture friend of mine. His reaction to Revel's statement that in 1967, 300,000 of San Francisco's 750,000 people were hippies (the figure is hopelessly inaccurate) was "So what? there were 50,000 fags there too." The point is, that regardless of its size, the youth subculture itself means very little politically.

Revel does have something to teach American radicals in terms of their own political effectiveness. American students especially have a nagging inferiority complex about their lack of radicalism! Revel points out that it is the extreme degree of their radicalism that has made the young Japanese, French, and German leftists so ineffective in practical political terms. They have become such ideologues, says Revel, that the rest of their society cannot make use of their ideology. American students are the true revolutionaries because their embarrassing habit of working within the system enables them to make significant changes. After all, Revel explains, a revolution only earns its name when it succeeds.

Americans should take a second look at the technological state and the mass society they so often agitate against. According to Revel, it is only economic uniformity that can produce the "cultural diversity" needed for a nation to break with the past and build a new and peaceful world.

The title of the book refers to Revel's hope that, given freedom from economic cares and opportunities to operate within the system, America's radical youth will fall away neither into religious irrelevancy (drugs, mysticism, or Jesus) or the tired, classic Marxist conservatism, but break away into a new future.

It is here that I think his "revolution" lacks militancy. While Revel believes that other countries lack the element of democracy or mass society or technology for revolution, the reason why Britain, Germany, and Japan fail as revolutionary models is that they are too chained to the past. But is America that bold a society?

Drops Of Rain On A Page

True, Revel points to the social and cultural freedom of the sub-culture as evidence for America's power of originality. But even with all our militancy for change, we need the energy, not of an ideology, but of a philosophy of hope to drive us into the future.

Whether we can develop some kind of Christian radicalism or moral humanism to give us the impetus we need, I know no more than Revel. But at least at this point, I would say that his revolution has a great deal more to fear from the myopia of the "Jesus People" than the doctrinaireness of the Marxists.

Revel is hazy about what kind of "new society" we must build. Furthermore, the book, though written argumentatively, is not by any means academic. Loose ends, absences of evidence, and unexplained statements abound.

As a scholarly work, *Without Marx or Jesus* is flabby and underdeveloped, but it is intellectually provocative and Revel writes with surprising insight. It is worth reading if one wishes to find another angle to the present possibilities for change.



- I. *I have called for you from across the water.
I have called for you where the purple laps
The shore at dusk, awaiting the coming of
midnight.*
- II. *Night sneaks down hesitating on black haunches
Surrounding me.
I stare contentedly into the dark face of miracles.*
- III. *I will carry you.
I will carry you.
I will hurry you
Past the tin houses,
Past the men slick as oil
Oozing from under the closed doors.*
- IV. *Have you never clutched at spinning beds
With trembling hands awaiting the heavy
Sleep of wine and bourbon?
Have you never risen in the morning
With blood in your mouth?
Have you never thanked the shadows for
Making you black and formless?*
- V. *I am entirely black.
I am as black as the cruel men
Sifting for crumbs among the hungry.
I am not cruel.*
- VI. *When I was five my father and I would walk
The eastern beach of Lake Michigan.
I would sink tennis shoed feet into the beach
To kick sand downwind.
Now, fifteen years later, the wind shifts.
The sand is lifted back to settle in my eyes.*
- VII. *Some may buy you diamonds
Some may bring you gold,
I offer but this poetry
All that this heart can hold.*

David denBoer

The October 8 issue of Dialogue contained a poem by Randall VanderMey entitled "Grandpa Fell Smiling Forever," which was originally published and copyrighted by Brown Penny Review. We regret the series of oversights which led to its printing in Dialogue without proper request or acknowledgement, and we apologize to Brown Penny Review for the unauthorized use of the poem.

1.

Two catches/ John Worton

(If you are not at a party when this is sung,
substitute the words in parentheses)

merry christmas

① Here we are a- party - ing a - mong our friends so fair and love - ly on this holi - day; ma
 ② (How we miss the party - ing) Love and joy come to you and God bless you and send you a hap - py New Year too. So
 ③ here's to your health + here's to mine and let's drink a toast to Musc, English, Art and Philo - so - phy!

2.

① God rest you mer - ry, gen - the - men let no - thing you dis - may,
 ② re - mem - ber Christ our Sa - viour was born Christmas day to save us from Sa - tan!
 ③ O glad ti - dings, O glad ti - dings of com - fort and joy!



Catches were popular English rounds of the 17th and 18th centuries. Numerous catches of the Restoration Period, including some by Henry Purcell, have texts which are so bawdy and obscene, that the texts had to be altered or replaced in modern editions. More complex rhythmically and melodically than present-day children's rounds, English catches exhibit various clever rhythmic devices like hockett and syncopation.

These two catches have decent texts. They are simply fun songs to be sung at or away from parties where three or more singers are gathered together.

A Study in Perseverance: The Feminine Mystique?

*The history of suffrage in the CRC
suggests deep chauvinist attitudes*

by Edward Vanderberg

Much has been said lately on the issue of women's liberation. Women are questioning the sanctity of traditions both in society and in the church. For the church there is a further concern: what is the correct exegesis for those passages which claim to subordinate women to men in church government?

This problem has also reared its head in the Christian Reformed Church. Whether it should be called ugly or by some other appellation remains to be seen. Within church government, the question of the place of women has not just recently arisen; it has been with us for at least one-half century. The Synod of 1914 formed a study commission to investigate the question of the right of women to vote in civil matters. Since 1914, the problem of the place of women in the church has received much more extensive handling. However, the problem of the roles of women in society, generally, and in the church, particularly, has historical antecedents which we should investigate.

In 1852, Barnas Sears, secretary of the Massachusetts Board of Education, addressed an article in *Bibliotheca Sacra* to the place of women in society. His is typical of the thinking of that era, and especially typical of the educators who influenced the rearing of women in their time-honored roles:

She is better adapted to the countless little assiduities by which she administers to the everyday wants of others than to those great and perilous undertakings which require a lion's strength and courage.

This does not imply, however, that there were not, even then, some who revolted against the assignment of such roles to women.

A few women who ought to have been men and a few men who ought to have been women have been strenuously endeavoring of late, to alter the structure of society and to accommodate it to their own unnatural tastes.

With some amusement the writer fantasizes about the role of women in politics:

And during a political campaign, when rival female candidates should, as the leaders of faction, harangue the multitude, how fine it would be, as Addison somewhere

observes, 'to see a pretty bosom heaving with party rage, and a pair of stays ready to burst with sedition.'

Now, as is obvious to anyone who has eyes to see, the stays have disappeared and movement has been seen aplenty. The times have certainly changed, but has the church changed, or can it indeed cast aside its stays without sedition to Scripture?

If the above quotations reflected the condition of women in society, conditions within the church were not much different. In *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 1870, a Reverend Ross writes that women "must be silent in church, and this silence is not to be based on any social exigency." This silence was not just in reference to preaching in church, but also included almost any form of speaking, be it teaching, prophesying, or even praying in front of the congregation. He based his opinion on a study of the passages written by Saint Paul and concluded that Paul's rules have no limitations of time; Ross also argues from the position that Christ elected no woman to be an apostle.

At the time Ross was pontificating, conditions in the Christian Reformed Church were very similar, although tensions were gradually creeping in. A new kind of pressure was building in the society surrounding the Christian Reformed Dutchmen. The American political arena was to undergo a radical change; women would soon enter a previously all-male scene and acquire rights they had never before held.

The women's suffrage movement in the United States was no doubt closely scrutinized by Christian Reformed churchmen. Articles began to appear in the *Banner* speaking against women's suffrage. J G VanDen Bosch, a layman within the Christian Reformed Church, stated in the *Banner*, in 1912, "... it means that all the political and social activities from which women have been excluded thus far will be opened to them and that they will lose all of the legal privileges which men chivalrously have accorded them. It means, among other things, that they will have the right to take part in caucuses and conventions and to hold public office." He held dogmatically to the conviction that the place of a woman is in the home; that the man is the head of the family unit and, as such, it is he who has the right and duty to govern by holding office and by voting.

VanDen Bosch's comments were directed at the impending election to be held in the State of Michigan, in which the right of women's suffrage was to be voted upon. Shortly after the November election, in which the bill was defeated, he attempted to explicate the Reformed position of the family and its relationship to the government. He felt that the concept of the individual in a democracy was a carry-over from the French Revolution, which propagated the idea that in a democracy each individual was to be considered as a basic unit. He contended that the Reformed

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tradition held, in contrast, that the family is the basic unit, claiming that a "...difference in structure means difference in function and influence." He viewed any possible breakdown of the family unit as a dangerous threat, which at all costs should be avoided. Voting privileges for women constituted just such a threat.

Just as in Paradise the woman succumbed to the crafty suggestion of the devil to become like God, so too in the suffrage movement women were being deceived into thinking that they could become equal with men and exercise authority along with them in public life. The Bible itself warned that women by nature had an evil propensity and almost indomitable urge to rule over men, which was the worst sort of social evil (Professor Henry Zwaanstra, Calvin Seminary, unpublished).

Several years later, the suffrage movement in the United States was accepted and the suffrage amendment was ratified by most of the states. The Christian Reformed Church was then faced with the problem of whether it should sanction its women members voting in national elections. In 1914, Synod was overtured to study the question and a study commission was formed; in 1916 Synod dealt with the question and attempted to provide an answer. In the debate on the floor, one spokesman, N Burggraaf, argued that it would be most unwise for the Synod to speak against universal suffrage. He believed that the Bible did not speak to the issue of the right of women to vote, and that if Synod condemned this practice, it would invite problems in church discipline. Could it, in the same vein, censure those who advocated universal suffrage? He responded that this question was a political question, and that the church should only make pronouncements upon ecclesiastical affairs.

According to Zwaanstra, "Burggraaf thought it would be most unfortunate if the church publicly opposed the law of some states and insisted that Christian Reformed women abstain from voting, while other women, many perhaps working for un-Christian purposes, took advantage of their recently acquired franchise." Synod consequently declared that the issue of women voting in national elections was a political question and therefore outside its jurisdiction.

During the period between 1916 and 1947, a time in which the church was faced with the question of women's suffrage within the church itself, a number of articles were written which debated the feminist question. After the law of the land was amended to enfranchise women, articles began to concentrate more on the larger question of women's role in the church and on the considerably more delicate question of allowing women to preach.

The *Banner*, in 1930, reported on a study of the feminist situation in the reformed churches of the Netherlands. That study questioned whether the nature of the congregational assembly was *authoritative* or *advisory* in nature. If the assembly were authoritative, women should have no right to vote; but if it were advisory, there should be no objection to women voting. The study concluded that the action of electing officers was to be considered authoritative and not advisory.

In 1947, Classis Muskegon overtured Synod to study the question of allowing women members to vote in

At this place

*no one sings here the song of earth
of black ground held moist
in the hand of a farmer
here, the dry-surfaced swamp
sinks sponge-like underfoot
black mold rots
under dried scum*

*I cannot sing now the songs of love
of thighs pressed together
in wet warmth of mating
here and now is dry and cold
telephone towers wire the land
signals flash from pole to pole*

*cottonwoods sing the new song of trees
death rustles in their leaves
cold winds whistle
faces freeze:
dry ice burns
when you touch me*

Glenn Fennema

congregational meetings, listing three reasons why this should be considered: "Some women requested the right to vote; some churches were allowing ecclesiastical suffrage; and Synod should settle the question." In 1949 a request was made to allow this synodical study to be continued because the question was exegetically complex and more time was needed for study; also, prominent Dutch theologians were studying the same question and the study committee wished to see their report.

In 1950, the committee issued a report, assuming a twofold task: "To delineate the nature and authority of congregational meetings, and to study the question of women suffrage at congregational meetings." Much of the discussion at Synod centered about the problem of whether the congregational meetings are authoritative or advisory. It was the feeling of the study committee that the church order placed a more or less advisory construction on this assembly; but the committee members personally felt any action taken by this assembly to be by nature binding, and therefore authoritative. In their argumentation they listed a number of experts in church policy (mainly Dutch, of course) who favored this authoritative construction.

Having thus resolved the question of the nature of congregational meetings, the committee spoke on the issue of the woman's role in the church. The Scripture passages they found most helpful in their search were Acts 1:6, 14:23; I Corinthians 11:14; I Timothy 2:12; and Genesis 1:27, 2:24 (passages dealing with women being subservient to men). From the study of these passages they concluded that the woman is the helper and the complements, while

the man is a leader and aggressor; *ergo*, man has priority in the sphere of government. From a study of the New Testament, the committee determined that women now enjoy a spiritual equality with men under the new covenant of grace, but that their natural differences are not abrogated by that covenant. The passages cited for the above position were Galatians 3:28; I Corinthians 11; Ephesians 5; Colossians 3:18; I Peter 3:18. The committee concluded that it would be difficult to justify women holding office or permitting them to rule over men in the church. In reference to I Corinthians 14:34-35, the committee stated:

What the apostle Paul forbids is that women shall take part in the discussion and critical evaluation which took place in public worship at that time in connection with the revelation given to the early church by means of the charismatic gifts of prophesying and speaking with tongues. Paul insists that women show deference to their husbands by being silent listeners, and such questions as they might have, be asked of their husbands at home. For them to take part in the discussion would, according to Paul, be a violation of the creation ordinance.

Two polar positions were delineated by this committee. Those in agreement held that "Congregational meetings are advisory in character; Scripture cites no passages which forbid the right of women to vote; the right of approbation and protest is already being used; and several Reformed church bodies have allowed women the right of suffrage." Those in disagreement maintained that "Congregational meetings are not advisory, but authoritative in character; Scripture passages can be found which can be so interpreted; women may help in church matters, this is within their nature; and Reformed churches of the Netherlands have ruled as recently as 1930 that Holy Writ gives no warrant for introducing women suffrage in the churches."

It was therefore recommended by the study committee that it would be unwise to make a statement at that time; that there should be a further study of the question; and that Synod should ask the next Reformed Ecumenical Synod for advice. Until such a decision was reached, they felt that no women suffrage should be allowed.

The question was therefore sent to the Reformed Ecumenical Synod and was subsequently studied by this body in 1953. Dr John Kromminga, representing the Christian Reformed Church's committee studying the question, reported to the RES that there were two points in which agreement was found among the Reformed churches: "That in Christ there is unity between man and woman and that women are not inferior members of the Christian church, and that the God-ordained differentiation between man and woman ought to be observed within the church as well as outside of it."

In their study of the relevant Scripture passages, the RES study committee stated these conclusions on the matter of women's suffrage in ecclesiastical affairs:

a. That Scripture clearly teaches that, by virtue of the unity of man and woman in Christ, women no less than

men share in the gifts, rights, and obligations which Christ has given to His church as a whole.

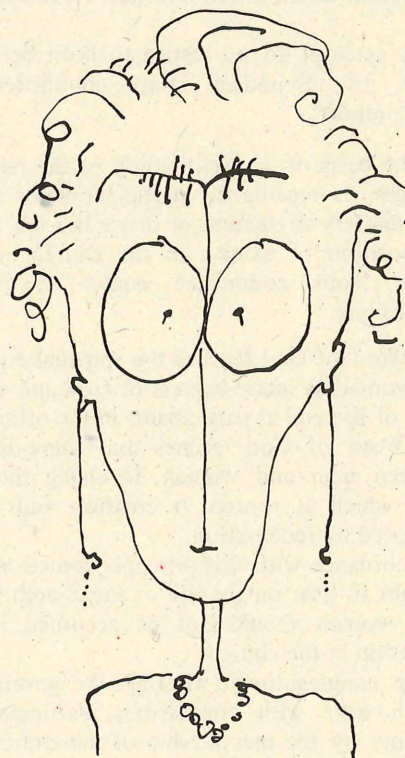
b. That Scripture teaches with equal clarity that God has given to men and women a different place and task in life, and that the coming and work of Christ cannot and may not be considered to have abolished this difference, neither within congregational life, nor outside of it.

c. That when the apostle Paul requires that women shall refrain from certain utterances in the church of his day, and from teaching in the church, he is addressing himself specifically to married women, in order to teach them that even in the congregation they should honor their God-given position with respect to their husbands; but that he does not thereby impose silence on women in all spiritual and ecclesiastical matters.

d. That the participation of women in the election of offic-holders is not only forbidden in Scripture, but also by implication cannot be considered to be a violation of what is fitting and proper for women in their God-ordained status.

e. That, therefore, whenever the right of voting is or will be given to the female members of the church, in order thereby to give expression to their liberty and independence as members of the church, this cannot be refused on Scriptural grounds.

continued on p10



f. That when a church considers the question whether the right to vote should be given to women, it should, following the example of Paul, reckon seriously with local customs as to what may be considered to express most significantly both the unity of man and woman in Christ and the natural difference between them.

In 1955, Synod stated that the report of the RES was neither detailed enough nor sufficiently backed by good exegetical study. A committee was formed to study the reports of two decisions taken by the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (1930 and 1952) and to report back to Synod in 1956 or 1957.

The committee met during the interim years and produced their report in 1957. In their study of the decisions of 1930 and 1952 they found a significant change in conclusions between the two decisions: in 1930, women were not accorded the right to vote in congregational meetings, but by 1952 they had been given that right. The committee felt that this change in thinking was due to three factors:

1. The two decisions differ in the weight which they attach to the Biblical teaching regarding the spiritual equality of man and woman.
2. They differ in the significance which they attach to the social situation to which the apostle Paul refers in I Corinthians 11 and 14.
3. They also differ in evaluation of voting as compared to approbation (giving approval or sanction). The committee of 1930 holds that approbation lies in the sphere of discipline (*tucht*) while the committee of the 1952 argues that there is no Biblical warrant for the distinction which the committee of 1930 made.

In an attempt to do justice to both Scripture and to tradition, the Synodical study committee issued the following report:

On the basis of a careful study of the relevant Biblical passages, as regards the participation of the church in such matters as election of office bearers, and as regards the position of women in the church and of church policy, your committee comes to the following conclusions:

1. The Word of God teaches the spiritual equality of man and woman as image-bearers of God and as heirs of the grace of life and as participants in the office of believers.
2. The Word of God teaches that there is a difference between man and woman, involving the headship of man, which is rooted in creation and which is not abrogated by redemption.
3. In accordance with this principle rooted in creation and brought to bear on the life of the church by the apostle Paul, women should not be accorded a position of leadership in the church.
4. In the congregational meeting, the government of the church rests with consistories. Participation in such meetings by the membership of the church is by virtue of the office of believers.

To

*I ride my bicycle to school.
I've discovered a quietly enjoyable affair.
In coldness I wear gloves
and tie a scarf on my ears and hair.
I pass several morning dogs
whose breath is grey and disappearing.
They're awake and I see them trot with ruffled fur.
I lift my feet when I see them nearing.
If the sun comes through where leaves were hanging,
and straight-line yellow alights on me,
I smile in thanks and warmth visits quickly.
I see the outline of a leafless tree.*

Amy Harper

5. The participation of women in voting at congregational meetings as an exercise of the office of believers is not a matter of assuming leadership over men.
6. In the church, politically speaking, there is not essential difference between the right of approbation, which women do already exercise, and participation in congregational meeting with the right to vote.

The committee therefore recommended to Synod that "Synod declare that consistories which determine to invite women members of the congregation to participate, with the right to vote, do so without objection from Synod." However instead of approving this recommendation, Synod tabled it and passed the motion: "Synod decides that women may participate in congregational meetings with the right to vote, subject to the rules that govern the participation of men. The question as to whether and when the women members of any church shall be invited to participate in the activities of its congregational meetings is left to the judgment of each consistory."

The Christian Reformed Church, through its Synod, has not presently altered the recommendation passed in 1957. Today the issue of women suffrage has quieted down; but another issue is gradually gathering momentum: the question of whether or not women can hold office. Responding in the *Banner*, in 1966, to a question dealing with this issue, Dr John Bratt believes that women should not be allowed to hold office because "Christ did not select women for the government of the church; rather, men were chosen; the qualifications of office apply only to men; Scripture teaches that women are not to teach in church, *ie*, women should not hold office; and tradition is against women holding office."

In his 1968 doctoral dissertation, however, Clarence J Vos, of Calvin's religion and theology department, studied the role of the woman in the Old Testament. Perhaps this will shed a different light on the problem:

Therefore, inasmuch as the speaking for Yahweh is still an aspect of the ministerial office today, one can hardly say that the Old Testament depicts women as disqualified for that teaching and communicative aspect

of the ministerial office. We do feel that the term *associative role* is in many ways a fortunate expression to describe woman's role in the Old Testament, and is probably valid even today. The word *associative* indicates a unity of purpose. It recognizes that normally man will take leadership, but it allows for the possibility that, when circumstances so dictate, the associate can and may function as a head and/or representative for others. One may not posit, on the basis of the Old Testament, that when a woman functions in an official capacity, her performance as an official is inferior to the performance of a man. "...The time is coming when men and women, without discrimination will share in the gift of prophecy" (Joel 3:1).

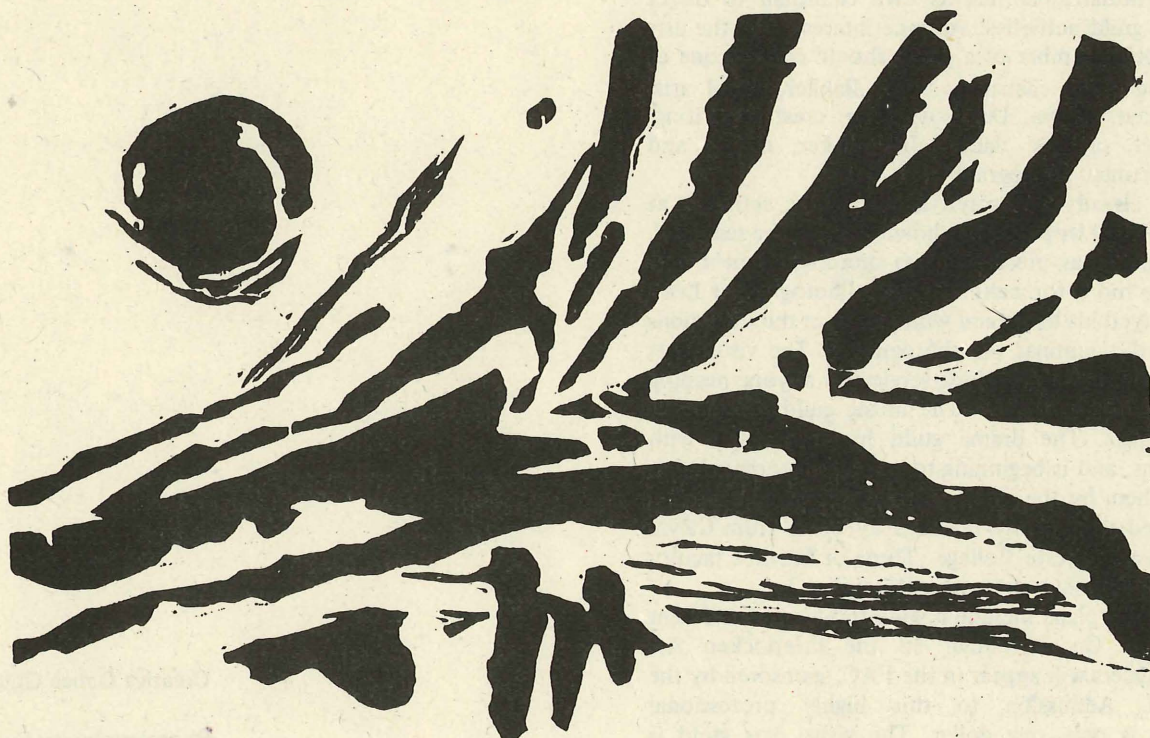
Also in 1968, the Reformed Ecumenical Synod released another report on the role of women in the church. This report was much more extensive and detailed than the report to the Christian Reformed Church in 1953. After an exhaustive study of the role of the woman in the church and in Scripture, the RES recommended:

1. That the Reformed Ecumenical Synod declare that in view of Scripture and early practice, the office of an ordained deaconess or woman deacon should be restored in Reformed Churches.
2. That the RES stimulate the churches to probe further into the question of whether all ecclesiastical offices should be opened to the woman, taking into account her own nature.

The exegetical problem today with the passages in question (and they are many of the same passages used in the women's suffrage issued) is this: Does Paul make a command for all time, or does this passage only reflect a decision based on social exigencies? N J Hommes, in the *Calvin Theological Journal* in 1969, argues convincingly that the latter is the case. This position, however, is not yet widely held in the Christian Reformed Church. Arguments have been voiced for and against in the *Banner* and other magazines; but to date the decision of 1957, which does not treat this question at all, still stands as the only official position of the Christian Reformed Church on the permissible functions of women in the polity of the church.

Throughout the issue of the place of women in the church, the church has attempted to remain true to the Word of God. The church has changed in the past, but only when it could do so with a clear conscience on the basis of Scripture.

It is also true, I think, that the changing social exigencies have caused the church to re-evaluate old positions; under this kind of pressure, new perspective has often created ecclesiastical change. One cannot wish too strongly that the church not succumb to social exigencies. One can only hope that men will have the courage of their convictions, that, when a new perspective is observed, they will speak cogently and wisely to a church attempting to remain true and faithful hearers and doers of the Word.



Guilded...

by David denBoer and Robert Voogt

Out of the artistic ashes of last year's Fine Arts Fiasco grew many things: bitterness, resentment, cynicism, and the like. As with all deaths of this kind, however, there still remained the breath of life. This breath of life has become a wind of change in the form of a guild structure to advance artistic expression on campus and to make this year's Fine Arts Festival a success.

The basic structure of the Guild is simple. Each artistic category has its own separate division: drama, creative dance, photography, music, visual arts, and creative writing. Each of these six guilds has one representative on a central committee which assists, guides, and coordinates the functions of the individual guilds into a unified effort. Also serving on this central committee are the faculty mentor, Chris Overvoorde, and the Fine Arts Guild chairman, Robert Voogt. Although each guild has autonomy for soliciting and controlling fine arts projects within its specific area, the central committee makes the final decisions regarding activities deemed suitable for campus presentation. Activities of the various guilds are interdependent, through the function of the central committee. This committee also determines scheduling for art events and allocates money from the fine arts budget. The official name for the entire structure of six guilds and central committee is the Fine Arts Guild, FAG for short.

Each individual guild has its own chairman to direct independent guild activities. Anyone interested in the arts desiring to be a member of a guild, should contact one of the following guild chairmen: John Bakker, visual arts; Timothy Talen, drama; David denBoer, creative writing; Pamela Nagel, creative dance; Jill Jonker, music; and Richard Voortman, photography.

FAG has already sponsored many artistic activities at Calvin. The film *Akropolis* was shown early in the semester. The dance guild has presented two morning chapels, and plans include more for next semester. Photographer Leon Riegler displayed his black and white work in the Commons and presented a seminar on photography. The visual arts guild is offering a poster-making service for anyone needing publicity for campus events. The music guild presented a seminar on jazz. The drama guild has been busy with improvisations, and is beginning to rehearse an original play written for them by the writers guild. The writers guild has also sponsored two poetry readings by poets from Calvin and Grand Valley State College. Three of Calvin's faculty members also read their poetry on December 2.

FAG's future plans include a wide mixture of different artistic media. On December 13 the Interlocken Art Academy Dancers will appear in the FAC, sponsored by the dance guild. Admission to this highly professional performance is only one dollar. The visual arts guild is planning a print show in December in the Commons. The writers guild has scheduled two poets to read at Calvin in

the future: Calvin graduate and published poet James denBoer will read on Thursday, January 13; Fredrick Manfred (Feike Feikema), also a Calvin graduate, will read during homecoming weekend.

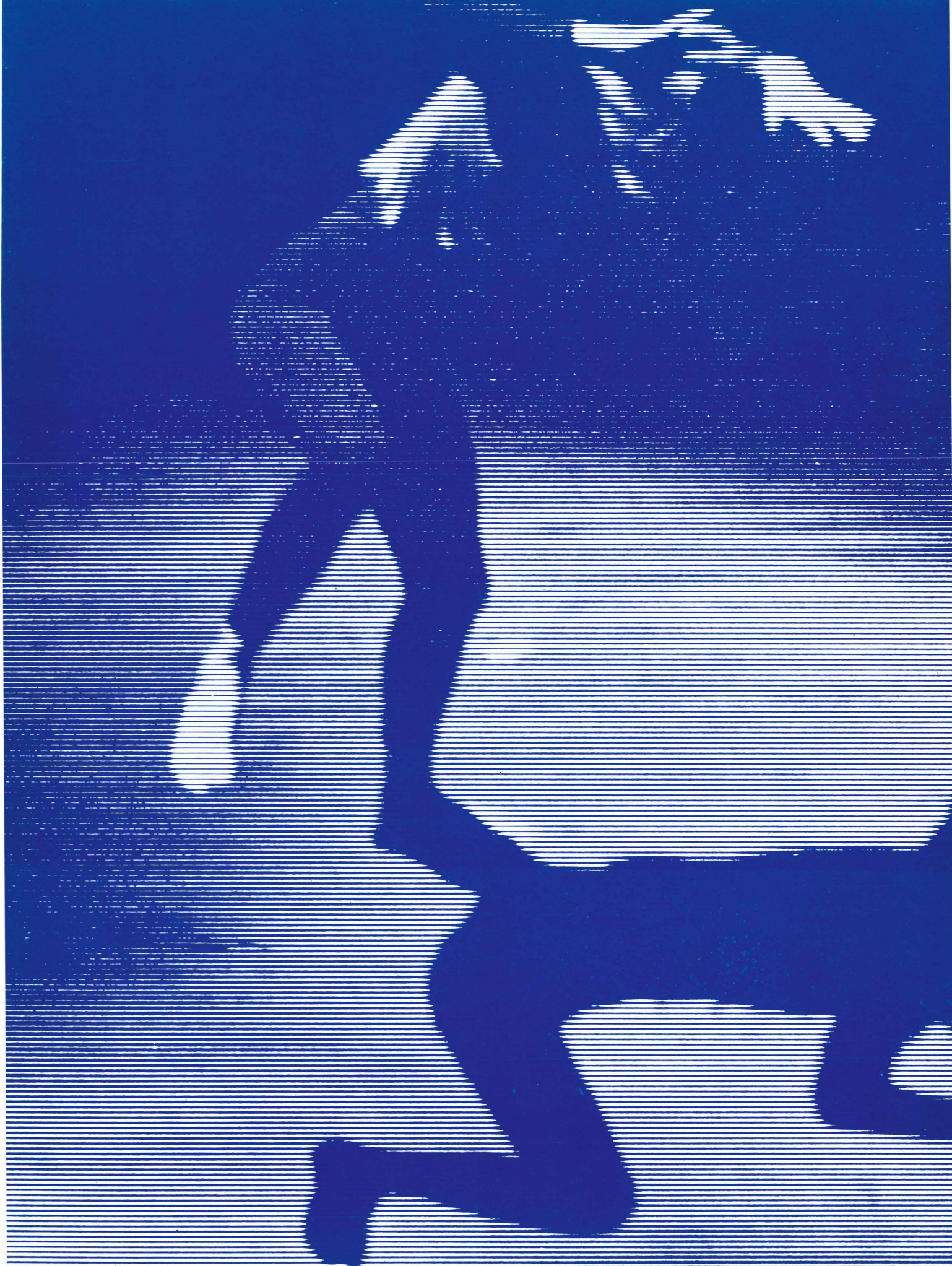
FAG will soon be setting up a central office to coordinate all its activities. Student Senate has permitted FAG to use the offices of the defunct radio station WCAL. In addition, the white barn on the west side of the library has been offered as a place for the guilds to hold meetings, workshops, and special events. However, the barn is not for FAG's exclusive use; it is intended for the use of all students for whatever project they may be working on. A bulletin board of guild information and activities will be placed in each of the campus buildings. These are for the use of FAG only. All persons involved in the guilds are also urged to check the ICB for notices of guild activities. To further publicize area cultural events, a Cultural Calendar will appear in *Chimes* at the beginning of each month. Anyone wishing to have a notice of an art event placed on the calendar should contact Robert Voogt, FAG chairman.

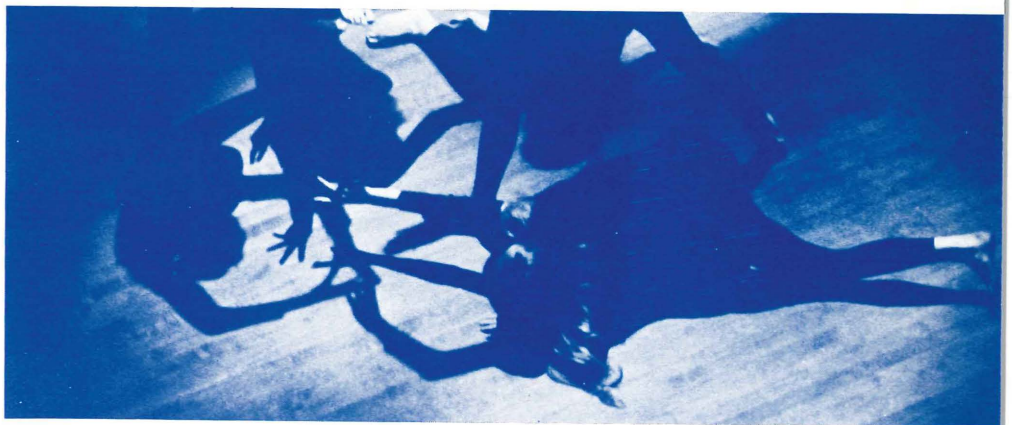
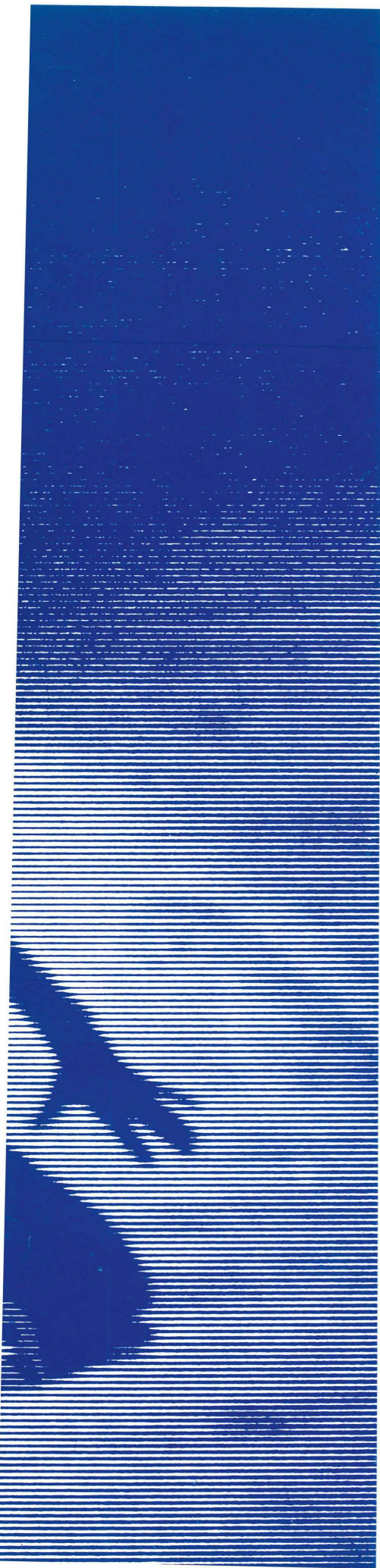
Creative Dance Guild

Photography by Susan Bosma

Design by Timothy VanLaar









The Revival We Are Supposed to be Having

by David Timmer

"Many an evangelical today is privately paraphrasing Auden in his prayers: 'Lord, send us a revival, but please, not the one we are supposed to be having.'"

Richard Lovelace, *The Christian Century*, October 24, 1971

Within the past year, Neo-Pentecostalism has emerged as yet another divisive issue in an already deeply divided and troubled denomination. Overtures to Synod concerning the "Charismatic Renewal Movement" resulted in the formation of a study committee to serve the church with advice on the matter, and Synod urged "ministers and elders to give careful attention to the teachings and practices of Neo-Pentecostalism in order to be ready in preaching, teaching, and counseling to face responsibly the complex issues involved." Synod also urged "those with special competence on the subject . . . to serve the church with published articles on the subject, evaluating the movement from a biblical perspective." A flood of polemical articles has followed, in both the *Banner* and the *Outlook*, and references to the issue on the editorial page of the *Banner* have become quite frequent. A conference was held on the subject by the Christian Reformed Board of Home Missions last spring; a *Charismatic Fellowship Newsletter* has been circulating within the denomination; and one Christian Reformed consistory has already seen fit to render a final decision on the matter, proclaiming the movement to be heretical, and barring those with Neo-Pentecostal views from positions of authority in the church.

Although such precipitous actions are, no doubt, the exception rather than the rule, and although, with a few exceptions, the discussion has been carried on with a spirit of candor and tolerance, there has been little progress made toward broadening the scope of the discussion beyond the "details" of tongues-speaking and second baptism; the discussion, therefore, has evolved into a two-sided debate, with little apparent hope for a creative synthesis of ideas on the subject. Professor Anthony Hoekema, a critic of the movement, has suffered the typical fate of seminary professors in the Christian Reformed Church: he has been designated as the "denominational expert" in the field, and has been awarded a virtual press hegemony in the pages of the *Banner*. The *Charismatic Fellowship Newsletter* is also, as might be expected, deeply partisan — almost to the point of dogmatic narrowness.

This confinement of the issues to specific manifestations

of the movement, and the resulting two-value orientation of the discussion, are frustrating for those (including this writer) who believe that the issues at stake are far more fundamental and that the possibilities for renewal are far more significant than has been indicated by the course of debate to this point. It is distressing to see the high potential for growth inherent in this situation dissipated in partisan controversy, to see the excitement and enthusiasm for renewal turn to bitterness and paranoia.

This does not mean, of course, that the question of glossolalia, the second baptism, healing, and prophecy are unimportant or unworthy of discussion. Certainly the church can be served by a searching of the Scriptures and an exchange of opinions on these questions. But they should be recognized for what they are: subsidiary issues. The primary issue can only and always be that of the very nature of the church itself, the sort of community that it is, the demands which are placed on it, the expectations it may justifiably have for itself. It is in relation to this issue that the "Charismatic Renewal Movement" can make an invaluable contribution to the life of the Christian Reformed Church, if the church is willing to put aside its prejudices and learn.

The theology that accompanies manifestations of "charismatic" renewal is often of a highly individualistic nature, emphasizing personal mystic experience and piety, and only indirectly dealing with the church of which the individual is a member. But this is not inevitably the case. Many Neo-Pentecostals hold a very high view of the church and its structure and mission, a view which flows directly and naturally from their Neo-Pentecostal position. This would seem only natural, of course, since in both Acts and the Pauline epistles the "gifts of the spirit" are always placed in the context of the church. The gifts are given to the church and are not in any sense the possession of the individual Christian. They are to be used for the edification and upbuilding of the church, and those *charismata* that are deemed less valuable for that purpose are de-emphasized (though never denigrated) by the apostle Paul. The *charismata*, then, are the possession and the power of the entire church, and he who would have to do with them, has to do with the Church of Jesus Christ.

The Neo-Pentecostal point of view, when it is motivated by this deep concern for the church, can contribute richly to the church in its proclamation and confession, in the quality of its communal life together, and in the work of the church within the world. The insights which the Charismatic Movement can bring to bear on these areas are not necessarily unique to Neo-Pentecostalism, but they may well owe their rediscovery and re-emergence in the church in large part to the Charismatic Renewal.

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To contend that the Neo-Pentecostal movement can contribute to the quality of preaching and confession in the Christian Reformed Church is perhaps, in the eyes of many in the church, to verge on heresy. The Christian Reformed Church has always been fiercely proud of its preaching, and in some ways this pride is justifiable. The CRC has maintained solidly biblical and doctrinal preaching in an age when the proclamation of the main American protestant denominations has been reduced to pious moralizing or self-conscious secularism. Yet, though the solidity (if not to say the inertia) of our preaching is undeniable, there is little evidence to indicate that we are preaching with power. Power is not identical with solidity.

What is involved in preaching with power is that the gospel is made a matter of inescapable choice for the hearer, not only on a propositional level, but on the level of moral commitment as well. The good news that God is alive and well, active in and in control of history, is also a summons to align one's self with God, to seek His will and to do His work. Neo-Pentecostals do not confine God's miraculous works of grace to the soul of the individual; they are busy proclaiming His active and visible presence in the world. Unlike their orthodox reformed brethren who insist that the age of miracles is long since over, they point to signs and wonders that, for them, confirm his presence. But proclaiming God's immediate and miraculous presence in human history necessitates a constant seeking after his leading within history, on the level of everyday occurrences. To separate this search after God's will in our history from a consistent searching and understanding of the Scriptures is invariably a dangerous temptation; but to understand Scripture without reference to moral commitment and discipleship in the world leads to introversion and impotence.

Neo-Pentecostalism can provide us with a sense of a living God who still acts in our lives on the level of everyday occurrences; preaching which is motivated by this spirit will compel men to be continually expecting and seeking God's leading in their lives. It will be bringing the Word with power.

The quality of communal life within the church also can experience significant improvement if we are willing to learn from the Charismatic Renewal movement. The Christian Reformed denomination has always taken its existence as a church very seriously. Questions of ecclesiastical office and order are considered important, and for most Christian Reformed people, especially those who live within one of our several ethnic "enclaves," the obligations felt toward the local congregation are the strongest social obligations in their lives. But the CRC also appears to be dangerously self-satisfied with the nature of its communal life; the church sometimes seems to be more of a social institution, reinforced by custom and held together by ethnic loyalties, than it does a communion of saints bound together under the Word.

Neo-Pentecostals direct our attention to the biblical givens concerning the nature of the church as community. The passages in Romans 12, I Corinthians 12-14, and Ephesians 4 which speak of the gifts of the Spirit always do so within the context of the entire church as the Body of Christ, and they have much to say concerning the

relationships of believers to one another. It should come as no surprise that those who are willing to take seriously the testimony of Scripture concerning the "extraordinary" gifts (surely this is an unfortunate nomenclature) also find here a revelation of the nature of Christian communion which transcends the mores and customs of the Christian Reformed Church.

The Scriptural testimony concerning Christian community to which Neo-Pentecostals can point us contradicts or transcends the mores of the CRC with special clarity in two particular areas: the hierarchical domination of the clergy, and the fragmentation of the church community in suburban life.

The Christian Reformed Church has traditionally been a *dominee*-dominated church. Both sociological and doctrinal factors can account for this. But the picture we are given of the church in the apostolic era is definitely not one of a clergy-dominated church. Certainly there is leadership in the church of the New Testament, and the lines of leadership are well-defined and the leaders invested with divine authority. But the gift of leadership is only one of the gifts which have been granted to the church. Others possess the gift of preaching, or the gift of teaching, or of helping, healing, prophesying, or even speaking in tongues and interpretation of tongues. The use of these gifts is to be carried out by all in the community of believers, and even in the worship service itself, contingent on the maintenance of good order. No one is to dominate another or the church; all are to humbly assess their own gifts and accept those possessed by others within the church.

Our congregations have also suffered from the fragmentation which accompanies suburban life in America. The sociological unit of the immediate family becomes primary, and the church as a sociological unit exists more as an *organization* than as a *community* of believers. Stress is inevitably laid on the Sunday worship service as the manifestation of the church, in place of an emphasis on community life together. In the apostolic church, where all things were to be held in common among the believers, where the gifts were to be manifested in the entire complex of community life, and where the distinguishing mark of the church was to be the love of Christians for each other, the urban life-styles of the Romans, the Corinthians, and the Ephesians were transcended, so that the church as a community visible within the world became a reality. The experiments of many Neo-Pentecostal groups with communal life-styles within the urban or suburban setting is indicative of a broader and more exciting vision of the *communio sanctorum* than is evidenced by the life-style which predominates in the Christian Reformed Church.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the Charismatic Renewal movement has important implications for the work of the church in the world. Both our goals and our expectations for the church's ministry in the world are transformed when we affirm that the power granted to the church is greater than we have ever dared to admit before, that the possibilities for the church are not limited by the same range open to the secular world, that the age of miracles is not a relic of the past, but a reality of the present. As Reformed Christians in the tradition of Abraham Kuyper and his "World-in-life" theology, which

emphasizes the necessity of bringing all of life under the lordship of Christ, we should be in the forefront of those who proclaim that God is alive and working wonders in the world, and that the church is the chosen instrument of his work.

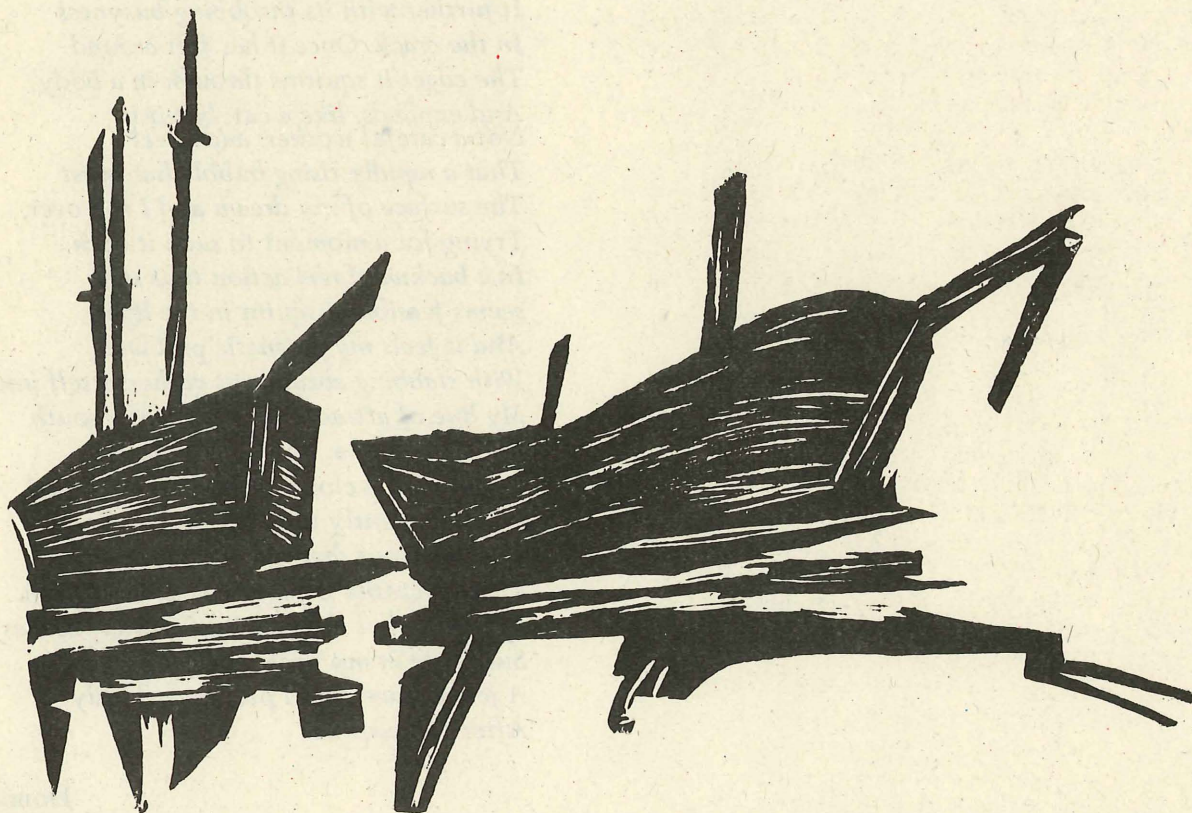
Of course, we must be on our guard, as the church in the apostolic age had to be on its guard, against those who counterfeit the power of the church and use it for their own benefit. The church yet needs those who possess the gift of discerning spirits. But the insight that the presence of greater power brings the opportunity for greater misuse of that power is not a reason for denying the existence of that power, but instead for using it with discretion and discernment.

Neither should the church be embarrassed by explanations on empirical, scientific grounds of the phenomena of its power. The uniqueness of the gifts granted to the church does not lie in their "spectacularity" or their supernatural nature, but in their effectiveness when used by the church for God's purposes. Here, as elsewhere in Christian doctrine and life, the ontological nature of the phenomena is secondary in importance to their function within the Christian life.

The Christian Reformed Church can gain much from an

encounter with the Charismatic Renewal movement, if it is willing as a church to put aside its prejudices and preconceptions concerning outward manifestations of Neo-Pentecostalism, and to explore the very basic issues which the movement raises. The church must never, however, put itself in the position of capitulating to this or any other movement within the church. Movements which arise within the church always present the danger of inviting such capitulation, which would inevitably carry with it the implication that it is the task of the movement, and not of the church as a whole, to determine the course of the church. The prerogative of determining the future of the church must never be surrendered by the church to any group or organization within or without its boundaries.

This responsibility of the church to govern itself under the Word, however, only serves to emphasize the necessity for the Body of Christ to evaluate humbly and prayerfully the alternatives for growth and fulfillment offered to it by such movements. If we allow an unrealistic self-image or the inertia of our doctrinal formulations to prevent necessary change and maturation, we may well be blinding ourselves to the dynamic and constantly new presence of God in our world. A blind church cannot lead a blind world into the light of God's salvation; let us open our eyes and ourselves to the renewing power of the Spirit of God.



Daniel in Search of a Mistress

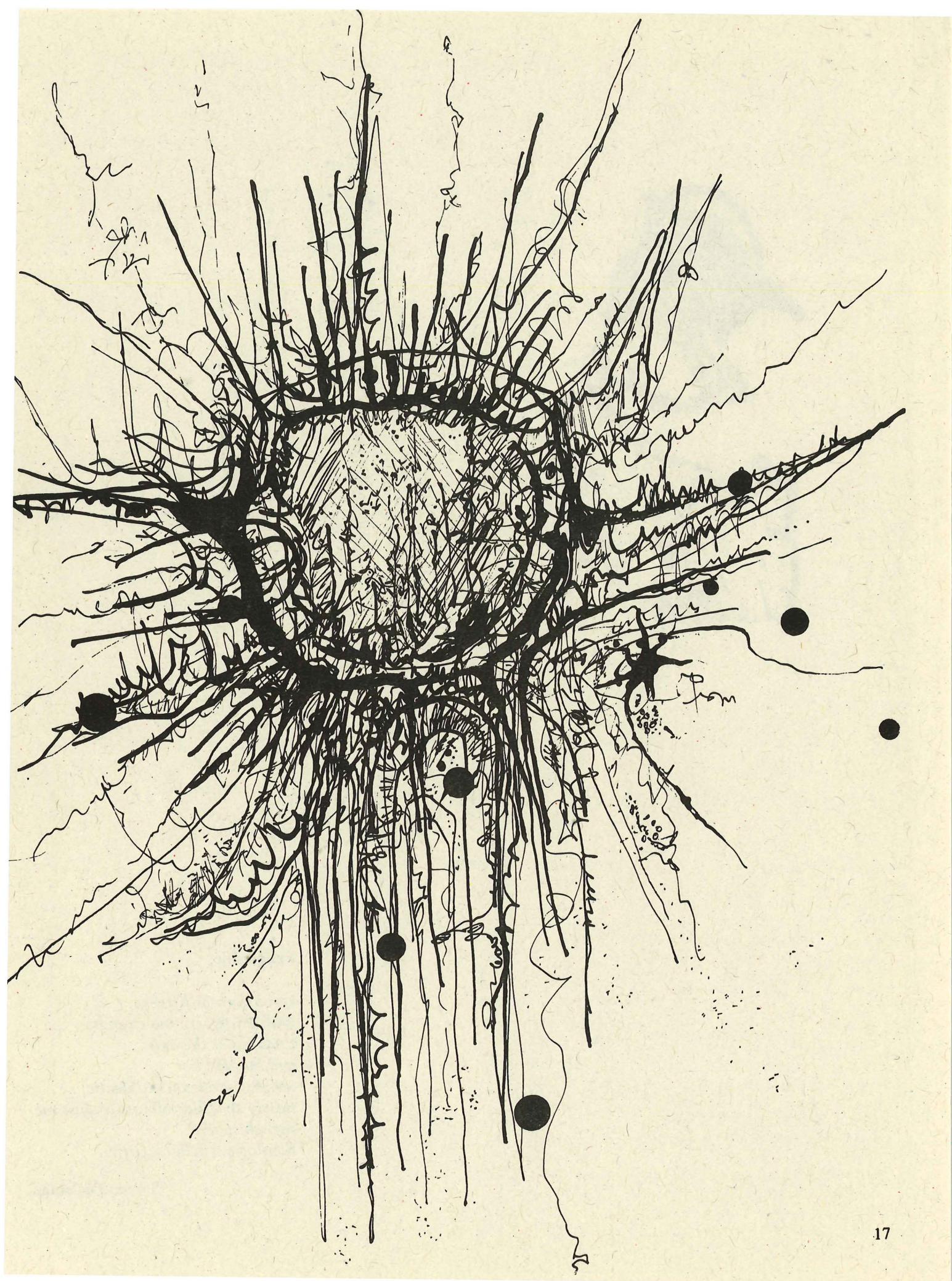
*Upon a yellow bicycle
born of a space cricket,
Daniel wheels into a thicket
in search of a mistress.
The brush is as wild as 1780,
and there is nothing there
but a rotting canvas shoe
and two dogs mating
awkwardly as rest home patients.
The bicycle refuses to be controlled
and escapes skittering off into quicksand.*

Hubert Van Tol

Awakening on a Summer Morning in Saturday

*The door was left slightly ajar,
And a glint of light has pried
It further with its throbbing busyness
In the crack. Once it has folt around
The edges it squirms through in a body
And expands, like a cat; but it is
Not a careful worker, and I feel
That a rapidly rising bubble has burst
The surface of my dream and I roll over,
Trying for a moment to suck it back
In a backward reel action that still
seems feasible. I squint in the light,
And it feels my magnetic pull and
With stabbing abruptness gathers itself into
My line of attraction, all its warm south
Poles facing me. I am five minutes
Early, by the clock, which has stretched
Its arms silently to sixty—forty—five.
The luminous dials are dark now,
Their necessity over as well as my dream.
It is then that the glow of Saturday settles
Suddenly in my neck and chest, forcing
A jerky yawn that I prolong greedily
After the surprise.*

Donna Huisjen





Fellowship

*since she was fifteen
with thick carmine strands
I paused at the exit
and queried her
was the service too didactic
slowly shuffling almost against me
she whispered
theologians talk too often*

Steven Dieleman

A CASE for Christian Political Action: NACPA

by Gordon Spykman

I wish I could say that the *National Association for Christian Political Action* needs no introduction. But unfortunately that's not true. So will the real NACPA please stand up and be counted, and remain standing for a few rambling introductions?

By the prevailing standards of bigness in American politics NACPA is still an insignificantly small outfit, a fledgling organization, a shoe-string operation. The news media haven't given it much coverage yet. That's not by NACPA's choice, of course. It reflects rather our *sitz im leben*, in this year of our Lord, 1971. NACPA is a minority movement in politics. It belongs to the "loyal opposition." It counts its support among a scattered band of Christians (in Iowa, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey) who have caught a political vision, people busy dreaming some big dreams about Kingdom politics, trying to rediscover what discipleship means today in the political arena of American life. NACPA is out to recover the lost art of earth-shaking, even if it means beginning with a few tremors here and there. For we believe firmly that "the earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof." But then, something must come of that confession.

Not many in NACPA carry impressive political credentials. Basically NACPA is a grass roots movement of concerned Christian citizens — concerned about living out the full gospel in the entire range of our life experience in a religiously whole way; concerned about obedience to Him who declared, "All authority is Mine in heaven and on earth"; concerned about the crying need for an unmuffled Christian witness in politics at a time in our history when almost every crucial decision which shapes our daily lives is made in the executive offices of government and in the courts of the land and in the legislative chambers. At all these levels of high command, who in the American political world is raising a voice in the name of Christian principles?

Those of us in NACPA who belong to the middle generation were never given much coaching in Christian political action; so we feel hampered by inexperience, and are bound to make mistakes. Earlier in this century some laudable, though feeble attempts, were made to get something going. But by the time we appeared upon the scene the idea of Christian political action was pretty dead. In fact, we were often given the impression that, politics being dirty, evangelical Christians ought to adopt a

hands-off policy. Even Reformed pulpits on the eve of elections had little more to say than "do your duty as citizens, be sure to vote, no matter which way you cast your ballot." The slogans were out: "Be a good American, go to church on Sunday," and "Be a good Christian, vote on Tuesday." All of which led to either an uncritical alliance between Christianity and Americanism or to existence in two worlds, one for piety and one for patriotism.

Meanwhile, half of our parents voted Democrat and the other half voted Republican, so that whatever Christian potential existed neatly cancelled itself out. The net impact of a Christian citizenry was nil. Oldsters could debate Democratic and Republican politics heatedly for hours on end with hardly a single meaningful appeal to the totalitarian claims of Christ or the religious directives of Scripture. For, you see, they had bought the prevailing American dogma that the public sector of life, including politics, is religiously neutral ground, "non-sectarian," a hard-headed practical civic affair. More often than not the whole idea of Christian political action was openly derided or politely shunned. In high school they gave us the impression that the two-party system is sacrosanct, so that we were not to tamper with it, but to try somehow to find ourselves within the system. Or if not exactly sacrosanct, then at least it is as venerably American as apple-pie. Christian politics got left behind in the old country. So don't get too many heady (or religiously fanatical) notions about upsetting the American apple-cart. After all, we owe a lot to our new homeland. Why should we become religiously offensive?

Most of us in NACPA today are the victims of such Christian paralysis in politics. And we sense it keenly: We have a lot of lost ground to recover, a lot of unlearning and relearning ahead of us. We have a long, hard road to travel. But we are further along today than when it all began about five years ago.

But frankly we are staking our hopes on the future. Kingdom ventures have to happen historically, both in overcoming the past and in shaping a bigger and better future, not only for Christians, but, if Biblical principles of liberty and justice and authority and love and *shalom* mean anything, then also for all our fellowmen. What better way of sharing with our countrymen a full-orbed Christian witness, not only in words, but also in actions? But we are

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counting on a new generation to carry the torch. Therefore NACPA is dreaming about branches of "Young NACPA-ers" to challenge the "Young Republicans" and the "Young Democrats" — though regrettably at this stage we can't afford full-page ads. But the idea is alive. And it is striking some responsive chords, not only in the Reformed community, but especially among other evangelical Christians who are sensing increasingly and with growing clarity the social-economic-political implications of the Biblical message. Maybe you recall the address by Dr Carl Henry at Calvin in October. In the course of the evening he dropped the key phrase, "a Christian political party — perhaps?" But far more crucial was another of Henry's statements: "We must find ways of turning our young people loose to march under the banner of Christ, or else assuredly in another decade they will be marching under other banners."

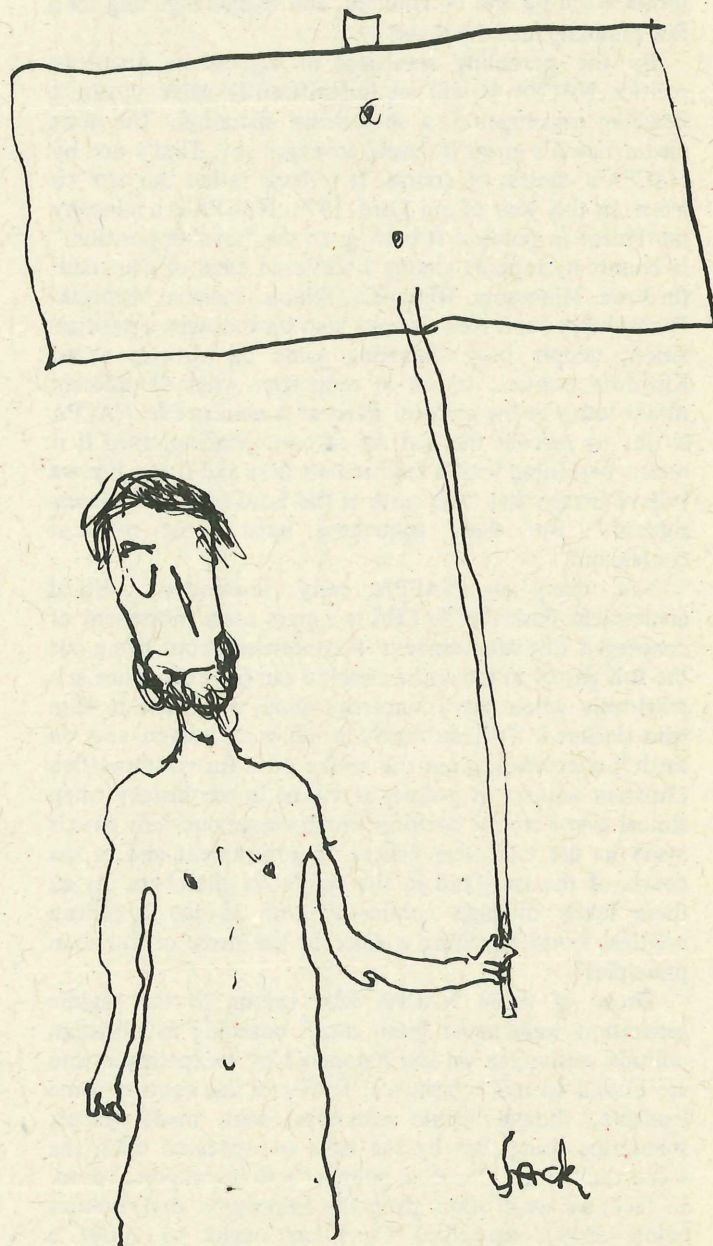
In the meantime, while hoping to mobilize a younger generation, middle-age NACPA-ers must make some of the first moves. We have a lot going for us in our Reformed tradition, reaching back to John Calvin's perspective on society and the world and life view of Abraham Kuyper. Kuyper captured something of the cosmic proportions of Christ's royal claim upon his disciples in the well-known words: "There is not a single square inch of the whole world of which Christ does not say, 'This is Mine!'" Christians are duty-bound to honor this claim in every sphere of life, including political life, and to find creative ways of driving home this universal claim wherever possible. Christian politics is therefore not a take-it-or-leave-it affair, nor the hobby of a few enthusiastic disciples, but a mandate resting upon the whole Christian community.

It is already past high time to get underway in earnest. In this decade, as perhaps never before, the time is ripe. The old cultural optimism has gone into almost total eclipse. Disillusionment is running high with the tweedledee and tweedledum stances of the existing political system. Eloquent oratory, but empty promises, and no direction, except more of the same. There are no real options in the offing, only a-little-more-to-the-left or a-little-more-to-the-right. Republicans are not much more than Democrats coming on a decade or two behind. Campaigns are reduced to popularity contests, tabulated by the pollsters, engineered by public relations experts, and climaxed by national conventions which gives every appearance of being more like a Shriners circus or a Mardi Gras carnival than serious business.

At bottom both parties abide by the unwritten rule of American politics which excludes from public life basic faith-perspectives. With expediency and opportunism as their guides, they appeal pragmatically to voter interest. Party platforms are nailed down with an eye to voter appeal. All involved bend every effort to perpetuate themselves in office. With one accord they all declare (in moments of truth), "I'd rather be president than right." Even major foreign and domestic policy decisions are often premised on projected repercussions at the polls. Little wonder that many people today are deeply skeptical of the openness of the present political establishment to authentic reform. Moreover, it is becoming abundantly clear that, despite deeply ingrained traditions of compromise and

accommodation ("politics is the art of the possible"), the present two-party system cannot honestly represent the full spectrum of political convictions now struggling for expression in our pluralistic society.

If Christians have anything significant to say politically as Christians, if they have any real alternatives to the dead-end answers born of a secular statement of the problems, then the time to act is now. NACPA is an attempt to answer that challenge. What about selective conscientious objection? Or the task of government in meeting the abortion problem? Or liberty and justice for all in race relations? Or equity in the distribution of educational funds? Or stewardship in promoting economic stability, sound welfare programs, and fair taxes? This is but a sampling of the issues presently confronting NACPA. We must work while it is still day. Who knows how long the doors of opportunity will remain open?



NACPA was born because some of us have resolved not to be caught sitting on our hands along the sidelines of society watching the slow death of our western culture without offering some word of warning and renewal, of life and hope. Can Christians afford to stand by in silence while radical left-wing revolutionaries and right-wing reactionaries square off in a political Armageddon? And who can feel at home with the big silent majority, the middle-of-the-road-ers, who have no clear-cut choices to offer a society hopelessly stranded at dead center? And how long must we keep going to the polls playing eenie-meenie-minie-mo games? And who has not had enough of politics which cannot rise above man, money, and might? And how long can Christians blandly accept the not-so-hidden assumption that religion and politics don't mix, since religion is a purely personal and private affair between a man and his God. For clearly this is not freedom of religion. It spells the death of the Christian religion as a vital force in society. The results of secular pretenses to neutrality in politics are clear: Christian faith in action gets driven ever deeper into secluded corners away from where the action is, out of the marketplace, out of the field of education, and out of the political forum. Neutrality in politics, as everywhere else, is an impossible possibility: possible in that some still parade this false claim, but impossible in that no one can really make it stick.

In the face of the contemporary tidal wave of secular humanism, NACPA proceeds on the faith-assumption that every political problem is basically a human problem, and that every human problem is a deeply religious problem. We are therefore seeking ways of expressing concretely our civil obedience to Christ in the light of his Word; and in His name some NACPA people are contemplating a case of civil disobedience to dramatize the pressing need for freedom and equity in education for all students and all schools. Somehow the tyranny of majority rule must be broken. NACPA believes it is time to initiate some new action, something positive, something boldly Christian, if today's Christians are to be a blessing to the nation. Our whole life is meant to be an exercise of faith. We must live that faith as a life-renewing, reconciling people of God in contemporary society. That calls for a communal effort in politics. For, as Christ himself said, "You are the light of the world" — *light* in the singular, not *lights*, not merely individual candles flickering in the darkness, but the body of Christ acting in concert, not only two hours a week in worship, but daily as we seek to do God's work in his world.

Indeed, NACPA has set itself to a Herculean task. What it requires is not, first of all, a tough organization and large sums of money, but a strong faith and hard work. But before we can move very far very fast, we must get people together for communal reflection on our Biblical task in political life, and thus seek to develop a more unified Christian political mind.

NACPA harbors no grand illusions of great "success." There are critics enough standing on the sidelines, fly-specking, despising the day of small beginnings, with little more to say than, "It won't work here in America — it's impractical." It's not very clear what that means. Does it mean that the Christian faith is impossible to practice in

politics? Or that Christian practice doesn't stand a ghost of a chance against the overwhelming odds of un-Christian practice? But that, of course, is nothing new. So it is not visions of "success," but a deep sense of Biblical calling to Christian obedience that keeps NACPA going. In fact, we have not even stopped to calculate the possibilities of "success." It's a matter of erecting a Christian witness in American politics. Yet we have counted the cost of discipleship, and we are in fact paying the price daily as we tackle the mountains of obstacles which must be dislodged. How to gain the support of the Christian community? What to do about publicity? How to build a Christian political mind? How to set priorities within a tight budget? How to start challenging the secular political establishment? How to make a few headlines? How to find the time and people needed to generate action? How to start turning the tide? For politics — Christian politics too — is team-work, out where the action is.

Firmness and Fairness

by Bernard Pekelder

(Mr Pekelder's article is a summary of a speech given to the Calvin Residence Hall Staff in September, 1971).

The Calvin Residence Hall Staff Handbook lists as the first responsibility of a staff member;

Supervision: The hall must be properly managed and cared for in order to maintain conditions conducive to the residence hall program. Consequently, it is necessary not only to enforce prescribed rules but also to teach proper attitudes.

This statement covers many issues: the purpose of the residence hall program, the best means to attain this purpose, the importance of encouraging proper attitudes, and the duty to enforce prescribed rules. While the last is perhaps least important in terms of your over-all activity, I would like to confine my observations to it because it is often the area of greatest tension and difficulty.

Implicit in any discussion of rules is the recognition of the need of an ordered structure. This is but a reflection of the nature of God, who is a God of order and not of chaos. All creation is undergirded by this order. "What a man sows he shall reap" is descriptive not only of the orderliness of nature but also of human affairs. "What a man sows he shall reap" is not an eschatological threat; it is a grant affirming that you can depend on an ordered world. Choices have consequences; therefore you can plan for the future. Life is not capricious; it is structured.

Structure in human relationships is given formal expression in the fifth commandment, the first of the second table of the law. It discloses God's interest in

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authority (which implies regulations) and obedience to it. Observance of this law spares man not only from disruption of the home but also from social anarchy.

Some structural directives for man deal with specific prohibitions: Don't steal, don't commit adultery, don't bear false witness. These are given by God to assure constructive relationships in society. Their violation can destroy a home or a nation. When a society enforces these rules it is concerned with a morality inherent in the God-given specification.

Most directives for the maintenance of social order have no inherent moral quality. Family rules about the use of the car or time to practice the piano, regulations about burning leaves or tying up one's dog, residence hall regulations about noise levels or women's hours have no inherent moral quality. They could be abrogated or changed. They simply reflect judgments about what is good for the total group.

Residence halls are miniature societies. Hence to maintain both individual rights and social order, policies and regulations are adopted. In line with the purpose of the institution they seek to promote development of personal potential and sensitive social interaction.

Admittedly some regulations are efforts to help some students help themselves. There is place for this if one takes the call to love seriously. It is not love to permit one to engage in what is destructive of himself. Nor is it love to permit what is disruptive of the total community. Thus rules also protect students whose rights may be impinged upon or violated by others. In a family the resolution of such tensions can usually be accomplished by personal interaction rather than impersonal rules. However, the nature of a larger community requires that such tension be avoided by general regulations.

Some regulations deal with absolutes: the prohibition of theft, dishonesty, drunkenness, destruction of property. These are not essentially institutional prohibitions; residence halls did not decide these were wrong. In prohibiting such conduct the college simply states that it abides by the judgment of God that such action is self-destructive and socially debilitating, and declares it is not acceptable as the life-style on the campus of this Christian college.

Some regulations deal with relative matters, determined by study committees, consensus, or administrative decision. Women's hours, noise levels, open house regulations, eating hours fall in this category. Obviously such regulations could be changed because they do not touch inherently moral issues. They exist to create a climate conducive to the protection of the individual rights and the preservation of a good social climate.

Your role as counselor includes the responsibility of maintaining this structure represented by rules. Your assumption of this task is an acknowledgment that you recognize the necessity of some order. Leadership is crucial not only in specific action you take, but in the general attitude you have toward college policies.

Here firmness in the spirit of Christian love is vital in your work. I am convinced that a student has a right to know where you stand so that he can know where he stands. If you lack this consistency it is not only an

invitation to personal stress as a counselor; it is disruptive of the atmosphere that can be maintained only in a structured setting. The Handbook reminds you that "you must not avoid discipline just because it is difficult to handle." The temptation to avoidance may be great, but you succumb not only to your own loss but to the loss of everyone.

Any member of a social group deserves the stability of structure, a "what you sow you reap" climate that declares you can depend on some order. Students deserve it in the halls. You owe it to them to face forthrightly violations of policy, to face them as peers who by their residence have accepted a societal setting and as responsible persons also accept the consequences of their choices. There should be nothing of personal vindictiveness or spite in your attitude or actions. It is simply an acknowledgement that your position incurs obligations, and that theirs has no less obligations, and all of us must together accept the consequences of our choices.

Lack of firmness, vacillation, or looking the other way does not gain the rapport and respect one may be tempted to attain. In fact it easily has the opposite effect. It lowers respect for the vacillating advisor, who is considered frightened or a soft touch, and at the same time makes it extremely difficult for another counselor who takes his responsibility more seriously.

But the issue is one of fairness as well as firmness. We are not fair to the student whose violation of regulation is overlooked, no matter whether fear or a mistaken idea of love dictates our course of action. He does not live in a world where choices don't have consequences, and he ought not to live in such a fanciful world on campus either. Neither are we fair to all the other students if a lack of consistency is evident in the residence halls. Firmness and fairness really go hand in hand.

What of those policies and regulations with which you do not agree? I remind you, first, that in any large community all of us find some policies which do not reflect our way of thinking. There are policies on this campus with which I am not in accord. But we are all called to live under regulations of the community, and to observe or enforce them, whatever our personal predilection may be. Certainly your role is to respect that structure until such time as it may change. If you undermine or refuse to enforce those regulations with which you disagree, by what logic can you expect students to accept your decisions about actions with which they disagree?

We cannot live without some structure established by regulations. Your task, among others, is to maintain that structure. Fairness and firmness are requisites in the task.





