

# THE VOICE



Mennonite Brethren Bible College  
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## Editorial Comments

Hubmaier on Church Discipline ..... *Henry Regehr*

My Political Interest ..... *Walter Kehler*

Influence in Politics ..... *Walter Kroeker*

Poverty and the Christian ..... *Vern Ratzlaff*

The Preaching Lab ..... *John Regehr*

Book Reviews

MENNONITE BRETHREN BIBLE COLLEGE  
Winnipeg, Manitoba

# The Voice

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The Voice, founded in 1952, continues to serve its constituency each year by dealing with theological and church-related concerns and issues.

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## CONTENTS

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Editorial Comments .....                      | 1  |
| <i>Vern Ratzlaff</i>                          |    |
| Balthasar Hubmaier on Church Discipline ..... | 2  |
| <i>Henry Regehr</i>                           |    |
| My Political Interest .....                   | 11 |
| <i>Walter Kehler</i>                          |    |
| Influence in Politics .....                   | 15 |
| <i>Walter Kroeker</i>                         |    |
| Poverty and the Christian .....               | 19 |
| <i>Vern Ratzlaff</i>                          |    |
| The Preaching Lab .....                       | 23 |
| <i>John Regehr</i>                            |    |
| Book Reviews .....                            | 26 |
| <i>Klassen, Epp, Regehr, Ratzlaff</i>         |    |

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## EDITORIAL COMMENTS

Balthasar Hubmaier (1480-1528) has remained largely unknown and unappreciated by those in the anabaptist tradition. The article about his concept of church discipline (p.2) should help us to understand better this sixteenth century martyr. Hubmaier was first a student, and later a colleague, of John Eck at the University of Ingolstadt; after accepting a pastorate in southern Germany, he came into contact with Luther's writings, and then with the debate in Zurich between mainline reformer Zwingli and members of the "radical reformation." He accepted re-baptism at Easter, 1525, and became a respected leader among anabaptists in Nicolsburg (north of Vienna). Here he was arrested in 1527; he and his wife were martyred in March, 1528. His concerns were those of the other reformers: the authority of scripture, the life of the church community, the nature of the Christian experience.

Since we in our own time wrestle with the question of church discipline, H. Regehr's paper on Hubmaier's concept of discipline is a needed one in connection with the question of the nature of the church. Another significant contribution to this debate is the book, **Concept of the Believers' Church** (reviewed elsewhere in this issue).

But Hubmaier was concerned with issues other than discipline; he had sharp words (with Hans Hut in the Nicolsburg Disputations) over the relationship of Christians to the state, specifically in the payment of war taxes, and took a positive view of Christian involvement in the state, e.g. with the magistracy. Short articles by W. Kehler and W. Kroeker focus on their own twentieth-century involvement in political affairs, and a short article on the question of poverty points to the need for Christian evaluation of political action. (See also the book reviews of **Government and Economic Policy** and **The Age of Technology** which speak further to these issues.)

We see, then, the need for Christian faith to bear a consistent testimony, both in keeping its own perspectives clear in relation to the life of the church, and in responding in deed to that life. We stand in need of the continuing dynamic which the Spirit gives, what Elizabeth O'Connor refers to as the "journey inward, journey outward"—engagement with God in the context of his people, involvement with the world's need on the strength of that engagement.

## BALTHASAR HUBMAIER ON CHURCH DISCIPLINE

### A Study in Anabaptist Theology

by Henry Regehr\*

#### Introduction

A society in which individualism is highly valued tends to become skeptical of and unenthusiastic toward collective measures aimed at obtaining compliance with collective norms. Our society exerts painstaking efforts to insure that "individual freedom" is honored. It is deeply imbedded in our constitution and therefore reflected in our legal system. "Infringement on privacy" is considered a violation of one of the basic ideological pillars of our society.

The ideology of individualism has penetrated, to various degrees, all our social institutions, including that of the Church. Consequently, it is not surprising to find the modern Church in Western society hesitant to discipline individual members who are known to have violated the moral or ethical standards of the Church. The general consensus seems to be that ultimately, the individual is personally responsible only to God. A reminder to the non-conformer of the questionable nature of his conduct, concern and/or commitment, is therefore considered sufficient regarding the Church's responsibility toward him. From there on, the individual is responsible for himself.

Sixteenth century Anabaptism exhibited from its earliest days "communal" tendencies,<sup>1</sup> as distinguished from individualistic tendencies. Members considered themselves responsible for each other's physical as well as spiritual well-being. The responsibility was extended to the personal ethical and doctrinal inclinations of individuals. The Church (or group of believers) was therefore quick to take disciplinary action with apostate members. The Church's responsibility toward apostate members did not cease even with the application of the severest penalty—excommunication. The Church's relation to erring ones was to reflect both "the goodness and the severity of God" (Rom. 11:22).

Taken by itself, the early Anabaptist practice of Church discipline seems rather harsh to the modern, individualistically oriented, Church and is, therefore, often dismissed as "out of date." On closer evaluation, however, it becomes clear that their concept of Church discipline is a natural outgrowth of their general theological orientation. A radical change of this concept

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would have to be accompanied by a substantial revision of their theology in general. An adequate understanding of the zeal with which they applied Church discipline, therefore, requires knowledge of their intellectual and theological milieu. Viewed in this light, their stand on Church discipline demonstrates considerable merit.

In the following pages the views regarding Church discipline of one prominent figure in the early Anabaptist movement—Balthasar Hubmaier—will be examined. Following this delineation, his viewpoint on numerous other theological aspects, which furnish the rationale for his stand on Church discipline, will be discussed. Several factors, which have contributed indirectly to his stand, will be treated briefly in section C, followed by a general evaluation in section D.

#### A. HUBMAIER'S STAND ON CHURCH DISCIPLINE

Hubmaier follows the general practice of dividing the concept of Church discipline into two parts: One, *bruederliche Strafe*<sup>2</sup> which has reference to the treatment of an erring individual who is still a member of the Church. The epitome of this treatment is excommunication; secondly, the "ban" which deals mainly with the Church's treatment of an erring individual who has been excommunicated. What are Hubmaier's opinions on these matters?

##### 1. The "Bruederliche Strafe"<sup>2</sup>

###### a. Purpose

Hubmaier's basic concern is the integrity of the Church. It must be kept pure and honest. Without these virtues, contends Hubmaier, brotherly love and faithfulness are totally extinguished.<sup>3</sup> In short, one of the Church's basic purposes for existence is undermined, if brotherly love and faithfulness are allowed to disintegrate.

However, Hubmaier is also concerned about the welfare of the individual. He quotes Matt. 18:7 "Woe to him through whom offence comes . . .", thereby evincing sympathy for the one who is on the road to incurring the wrath of God.

###### b. Necessity

Preaching, the breaking of bread, and baptism are in vain, Hubmaier believes, if Church discipline is precluded.<sup>4</sup> He sees the necessity for discipline in man's penchant to make scripture justify his selfish desires and conduct. To do this, man uses half truths (*halben warhaitten*), which do not emphasize his responsibility for his conduct. Such men stress that salvation is by faith alone, not of works. They are quick to point to Eph. 2:8 when confronted with: "It is written: Forsake sin, malice, etc." But this attitude brings about unfaithfulness and unrighteousness which only leads mankind deeper into trouble, because sin has a "cancerous" property. The underlying assumption is that man in

a state of apostasy has lost the power of moral discernment and that it is therefore, the Church's responsibility to pressure the apostate as much as possible within a certain limits to leave his erring ways.

Necessity is also laid upon the Church by the commandment of Christ: "Naemlich, wie er (Christ) dir geboten, deinen Bruder zu strafen, oder du bist seiner Sunden teilhaftig."<sup>5</sup> Failure to rebuke sin is in fact tacitly condoning it. It actually defiles the Church.

Furthermore, discipline affects not only the recipient thereof, but also the giver thereof. Rebuke exposes one to counter-rebuke; exposing someone's secret sin invites exposure of one's own failures and shortcomings. A likely concomitant of brotherly rebuke is the self-examination and purification of those administering that rebuke. Hubmaier makes reference to the command in Matt. 7:5 not to try to remove the speck out of a brother's eye before removing the beam from one's own eye. This commandment, however, is never to be used as an excuse for failing to admonish and rebuke others.<sup>6</sup>

### c. Method

The Church is not lord over its members, but only a watchman. Matt. 18:15-17 is recommended as the ideal pattern of applying Church discipline. Emphasis is on brotherly admonition and persuasion. It is to be done in love and not out of envy.

The method to be employed is always subordinate to the aim of discipline, namely the restoration of the erring one, and the integrity of the Church. Consequently, if a secret sin is repented of in secret, there is no need to expose it before the Church. Exposure of secret sins is warranted if secret rebuke does not elicit repentance. Visible (oeffentliche) sin, on the other hand, is to be rebuked openly, so that others will be deterred.<sup>7</sup>

## 2. The Ban<sup>8</sup>

### a. Occasion

The ban is a logical extension of the "bruederliche Strafe," or perhaps more accurately, a severe application thereof. "Die Voraussetzung fuer die Anwendung dieses Zuchtmittels ist, dass der Fehlende durch die Bruederliche Strafe nicht zur Besserung bewegt werden konnte."<sup>9</sup>

The conduct of the person in question must be contrary to the expressed command of Christ and the Church. It must involve a "grave" sin, which the person refuses to forsake upon private and public rebuke from the Church. The essence of his sin then is not an accidental slip but a failure to live up to his baptismal vow to take correction and admonition from the Church.<sup>10</sup>

### b. Purpose

The purpose of the ban is positive. A repentant sinner is to

be received back into the Church with joy. It is corrective punishment, and therefore, for the good of the sinner.

Furthermore, it is to prevent the shaming of the Work and the Church. It is also for the protection of recent converts (Neulings) and the weak who are to be shocked at the severity of the discipline in response to grave sin.<sup>11</sup>

### c. Treatment of the offender

The Church is to punish the offender by shunning (Meidung); to sever all relations with him. This shunning extends to eating together. Consequently, all relations that are not as essential as eating are therefore also to be avoided. This includes work and friendship.<sup>12</sup>

However, this shunning has its limitations. He is not to be physically maltreated and/or deprived of food, drink and shelter. The shunning is of a spiritual and personal nature to show the offender that love stops when one who has tasted God's love scorns it.<sup>13</sup> Not only the local congregation, but the Church universal is to shun him.<sup>14</sup>

## B. RATIONALE FOR HIS STAND

It has been indicated in the previous section that Hubmaier's viewpoint on Church discipline is a natural outgrowth of his general theological orientation. Why, for example, can he contend that the Church has the authority to put an impenitent sinner under the ban? Underlying this contention are certain views about the nature of the Church and the individual's relation to the Church. These views that are related to, and undergird, his stand on Church discipline will be reviewed in this section.

### 1. The Nature of the Church

One striking aspect of Hubmaier's view of the Church is its authority. He interprets Matt. 16:16-19 literally to the effect that Peter was given the keys to the Kingdom of Heaven by Christ. What he binds here, shall be bound in heaven.<sup>15</sup> The first of these keys is the authority to admit to the Kingdom of Heaven those who believe through the preaching of the Word and water baptism. The second key is the authority to lock the erring ones out by means of the ban.<sup>16</sup>

With these two keys comes the authority to establish the Church. The keys are to be used in the context of the Church and therefore remain the property solely of the Church. Consequently, there is no admittance to the Kingdom of Heaven possible except through the Church. Hubmaier asserts without apology that

... whomever the church binds and casts out of her assembly on earth, he is bound before God in heaven and excluded from catholic Christian Church (out of which is no salvation), since Christ himself while he was yet on earth, hung both

keys at her side, giving them to her alone, his spouse and beloved bride.<sup>17</sup>

Hubmaier conceives of the Church universal as the abode of the Spirit of God during the bodily absence of Christ. Christ's power and authority is therefore administered by the Church for the "Aufloesung und Bindung der Suenden" until his other bodily coming (Zukunft).<sup>18</sup> The Church universal can therefore not err in administering the ban, since it is the abode of the Spirit of God. The local Church can err in this, since it does not have the fullness of the Spirit. Hubmaier himself would be willing to submit to a truly universal council.<sup>19</sup>

## 2. The Nature of Man

On the basis of I Thess. 5:23 and Heb. 4:12 and other passages, Hubmaier postulates a trichotomous man: namely, spirit, soul and body.<sup>20</sup> These are three distinct components or levels of man's existence. Each level has its own will. The three levels of the human will are basic to Hubmaier's explanation of the nature of man's sinfulness and the possibility of his salvation.

Prior to the fall of man all three levels of the will were free and good.<sup>21</sup> The will of the spirit, Hubmaier contends, did not participate, and then lost the capacity to distinguish between good and evil. The will of the body also participated and was thereby completely corrupted. The soul, because of its inability to distinguish between good and evil, is now haplessly imprisoned by the corrupted will of the body.<sup>22</sup> Consequently, the soul is not capable of "willing" the good. Salvation therefore consists in the restoration of the discerning capacity of the soul. When this healing of the soul is effected by Christ, the soul is freed and can will the true and the good.<sup>23</sup>

The fact that the will of the soul was free and good before the fall and then participated in the fall, indicates that the soul is capable of doing that again even after being healed by Christ. The reason is the corrupt will of the body. Regeneration does not restore the body to goodness.<sup>24</sup> The presence of the corrupt will of the body is therefore a constant danger to the freedom and goodness of the soul's will. It is through persistent obedience to God that the soul is preserved. Through disobedience the soul's power of discernment between good and evil is progressively weakened. At this point, Church discipline becomes crucial and necessary. As much as is possible, the erring one is to be induced to obey the Spirit of God so that the soul can regain and maintain the power of discernment and restore the inner fortitude necessary for voluntary obedience which is essential to salvation.

## 3. The Nature of Baptism

The Church has the power to admit and ban people from the Kingdom of Heaven because Christ has given her the keys. Necessity is laid upon the Church to administer discipline because

the individual's frailty and predisposition toward sin can easily rob him of the capacity to discern between good and evil. A third pillar of support for discipline pertains to the Church's right or jurisdiction over the individual.

In Hubmaier's view the right (recht) to apply brotherly discipline comes out of the baptismal vow.<sup>25</sup> At baptism, the individual makes a pledge to submit himself to brotherly and scriptural admonition. This pledge is an indispensable part of the admittance requirements and cannot be revoked without offense. Furthermore, baptism is a sign and symbol of obligation to be united with Christ and, by implication, with the Church.<sup>26</sup> It is because the individual has voluntarily accepted this symbol of obligation and taken the baptismal vow that the Church has the moral prerogative to administer discipline to erring members, even to the extent of imposing the ban.

## C. CONTRIBUTING FACTORS TO HIS STAND

In a sense, the "contributing factors" are part of the rationale. However, their influence seems less direct. They provide the general context that permits, but does not necessitate, the emergence of the viewpoint in question. Of particular interest is his usage of the Scriptures and the historical conditions in which he lived.

### 1. His Usage of the Scriptures

#### a. Pervasiveness

Hubmaier's writings are filled with quotations from scripture. Virtually any point he wants to make is supported by several verses from different parts of the Bible. This method is commonly known as proof-texting and is imbued with some negative connotations. On the other hand, it reflects a number of positive aspects about his view of the Scriptures.

One, he has confidence in its validity and authority. Any argument is considered adequately supported or refuted, as the case may require, by one or more relevant scripture passages. Secondly, it evinces the focal concerns of his total endeavor. Uppermost in Hubmaier's mind are the claims and teachings of Christ. The matter of priorities is clear; a valuable personal asset in a time of political, social and religious upheaval. The latter aspect, however, is not an unmixed blessing, as will be seen in the following pages.

#### b. Literalness

The quest for and/or practice of a "literal" interpretation of the Bible has some noble traits. It portends to be linguistically precise and intellectually unbiased. And yet, it is open to serious limitations as can be ascertained from Hubmaier's arguments.

Take for example his rationale for the authority of the Church universal. He makes a point of the distinction between the singular 'ou' (dir) and the plural 'you' (ihr) in Matt. 18:18. The singular signifies to him the oneness (ainikhait) of the Church. The plural means that many people will enter the Church. On the basis of this distinction he argues that there is no salvation outside the Church, because only the Church has the key to the Kingdom of Heaven.<sup>27</sup> In everyday conversation, the plural and singular of personal pronouns are often used interchangeably; at least in the sense that no particular distinction is intended. Matt. 18:18 could easily be interpreted that way. A problem with literalism then is the tendency to make something substantial of linguistic aspects which in their ordinary usage do not convey such distinction.

A second problem of Hubmaier's literalness is his disregard for linguistic idioms. The reference to spirit, soul, and body in I Thess. 5:23 appears to signify mainly "totality of the person." To Hubmaier, it indicates that a person has three distinct components, each with its own will, etc.<sup>28</sup>

### c. Simplicity

Hubmaier goes for the most obvious meaning of a passage in relation to his own time and circumstances. It is noteworthy that for all of his abundant use of scripture, he never asks what a certain passage means in the particular context in which it appears. In short, a systematic and exegetical approach to scripture is most conspicuous by its absence. It demonstrates a somewhat naive concept of the nature and function of language as a vehicle of communicating thought. As a result, he can read meanings into scripture passages, that aren't really there and at the same time miss some meanings that are definitely present. Hubmaier does not have a monopoly on this tendency, but his simplistic approach to scripture makes him more susceptible to it.

This usage of scripture allowed him to arrive at, and give Biblical sanction to, principles that are as much (perhaps more) a reflection of contemporary circumstances as (than) of sound Biblical teaching.

## 2. Historical Conditions

Existing conditions do not exactly determine contemporary thoughts and opinions, but they exert a significant influence on them. Predominant conditions that are related to man's basic needs attract the most attention and thereby influence people's sense of priority and urgency. Several of these conditions that in all likelihood influenced Hubmaier's mind stand out.

### a. The oppressed minority

The Anabaptists were rejected and persecuted by virtually all sectors of contemporary society. External pressure almost invariably increases in-group cohesiveness. Peter Klassen has well

documented the Anabaptist teaching of mutual aid in regard to property ownership. The possessor's power over his property was not considered to be absolute. It is limited by the "moral obligation" to help others.<sup>29</sup> There is ample scriptural support for practicing mutual aid. Contemporary circumstances make it a focal concern for Anabaptists, including Hubmaier. It is then the combination of historical conditions and Biblical teaching that gave rise to the strong emphasis on mutual obligations and fellowship within the community of believers. Included in this emphasis on community was the responsibility to practice community discipline.

### b. Leadership position

It is within the nature of things that a leader draws his support from followers. Without followers, his leadership function would cease. Consequently, a leader is more concerned about holding his followers together. This is best done by participation of the followers.

Hubmaier's training and, it seems, his personality, predisposed him toward a leadership role. His followers as well as his opponents recognized this quality in him wherever he went and related to him accordingly. This fact is well demonstrated in his role in the Waldshut Peasants' War of 1524-25. G. Williams says that Hubmaier took an active and creative part in "the local quest for civic liberty and the widespread urge for renewal of the church." This earned him the ire of the Catholic and government authorities who demanded his removal. However, his parishioners supported and protected him.<sup>30</sup> Experiences of this nature lead to a keen awareness and appreciation of the possible impact as well as the necessity of united effort. This awareness leads to an emphasis on matters pertaining to group cohesiveness and integrity, one form of which is Church discipline.

## D. EVALUATION

The wrath which Hubmaier caused the political and religious leaders of his day suggests that he was rather potent as a leader. If they could have discredited him among the Anabaptists, he would not have been a thorn to them.

One of his important contributions was his concern for, and insistence on, the integrity of the Church. Without this integrity it is doubtful whether the harrassed remnant could have survived. Whether his method of keeping the Church pure is applicable today is questionable. There are definite reasons why the ban does not have the same effect as it did in Hubmaier's time. But the concern for the spiritual health and integrity of both the individual and the Church is a timeless lesson.

His anthropology, too, is somewhat far fetched; yet some of

his emphases are very wholesome. His method of arriving at the idea of three levels of existence and three wills undermines the credibility thereof. On the other hand, his emphasis on the individual's need for spiritual and moral props from the community of believers rings an authentic chord.

The validity of proof-texting in the application of scripture is, to say the least, in doubt. And yet his knowledge of, confidence in, and submission to the Scriptures is admirable. Hubmaier makes the Scriptures alive and relevant for his day. That is a timeless lesson for believers of all ages.

#### FOOTNOTES

1. P. Klassen, *The Economics of Anabaptism*, London: Mouton & Co., 1964, 50.
2. B. Hubmaier, "Von der brüderlichen Strafe." In J. Westin and T. Bergsten (ed.), *Quellen zur Geschichte der Täufer*, IX. Band, Gütersloher Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn, 1962, 337-346.
3. *Ibid.*, 340.
4. *Ibid.*, 339.
5. *Ibid.*, 342.
6. *Ibid.*, 343.
7. H. S. Bender, et al, (ed.), *Mennonite Encyclopedia*, Vol. II, Scottdale, Pa.: Mennonite Publishing House, 1956, 830.
8. Hubmaier, "Von dem christlichen Bann." In J. Westin & T. Bergsten (ed.), *op. cit.*, 366-378.
9. *Ibid.*, 366.
10. *Ibid.*, 372.
11. *Ibid.*, 367.
12. *Ibid.*, 373.
13. *Ibid.*, 274.
14. *Ibid.*, 375.
15. *Ibid.*, 368.
16. G. H. Williams, *The Radical Reformation*, Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1962, 221.
17. *Ibid.*, 221.
18. Hubmaier, "Von dem christlichen Bann." 371.
19. Williams, 223.
20. B. Hubmaier, "Von der Freiheit des Willens." In J. Westin & T. Bergsten (ed.), *op. cit.*, 379-397.
21. *Ibid.*, 384.
22. Williams, 220.
23. Bender, 828.
24. Hubmaier, "Von der Freiheit des Willens." 384.
25. Hubmaier, "Von der Brüderlichen Strafe." 345.
26. Williams, 134.
27. Hubmaier, "Von dem christlichen Bann." 368-9.
28. ...., "Von der Freiheit des Willens." 382-3.
29. Klassen, 28ff.
30. Williams, 64-67.

## MY POLITICAL INTEREST

by Walter Kehler\*

There are many kinds of politics and to some extent we are all involved in these, and we have no choice about the matter. For example, we have politics in business, we have social politics, cultural politics and even church politics. And indeed, in my area of observation, at least, the church has always been a most fertile base for political activity of various kinds. We're dealing today with the political activity as it relates to government. I mention these others merely to sharpen our understanding somewhat of what the nature of political activity is.

Now I should protest a bit. I think that I'm not too well qualified to deal with the subject in the range of political activity, because I'm not old enough to boast of many years of experience. Nor have I ever sought or held elected office. My only involvement in this area, so far, has been in the field of organizational activity. But there's a considerable scope there too. Now that means I've been involved in matters like engaging in policy committees, and fund-raising, I've managed collection campaigns for individual candidates, and I've assisted in managing election campaigns for party leaderships.

Now with some of this experience you get a little bit of opportunity to at least observe what happens in this arena. Now I'm asked to say why I am in politics and that's a personal question and I'll try to give you a personal answer. Perhaps in the process, we may come upon other factors which exist, but which I have not personally experienced. This question is not really that simple and the answer is not really that simple. For me there really isn't any one encompassing answer. Rather there are a number of elements which combined together to guide me in the direction of political activity. None of these are the sole reason. Some of them are, perhaps, even trifling, but they all combine and I would be hard-pressed to give you any definite recipe of the relationship of these ingredients to one another.

I'm conscious, furthermore, of the ease with which we can fall into the conditioned response and the replay of the Mennonite Brethren party line when we answer a question such as this. And I want to hold that, too, if I can. But at the same time, there's an element of truth in it that can't be ignored either.

Now if you ask me why I'm in politics, it is in part almost to

\* Mr. Kehler, a practising lawyer in Winnipeg, gave the substance of this article in an address on the occasion of a Pastors'-Laymen's Conference, hosted by MBBC in 1969.

ask me why I'm a lawyer, because about two-thirds to three-quarters of all the politicians in the country have been trained as lawyers and this illustrates the rampancy of the disease in our profession. Actually it is not surprising that a lawyer should come to a larger involvement in politics if you examine what we do. The nature of our profession is such that we spend virtually all of our time dealing with exactly the same things that government deals with. We are usually the first to know if laws are unjust or unworkable, or if legislation in new areas is needed. Our whole training programs become frustrated when laws are unjust or inadequate, and we also deal with the wider cross-section of people, particularly in the practise of law, and the widest cross-sections of situations in which they can become involved. Combine that with our training and I think you can see the reason why we're good prospects for the function of government or public life.

Now in this context, I think, in my own personal case, I should also add my association with my partners in the law firm of which I am a member. There are five of them who are senior to me. Only one of them has, more-or-less, kept clear of the game. Another—the second—is probably the most effective lobbyist for the insurance industry that our provincial government has met. A third has served three terms on Metro Winnipeg Council and has sought elective office under both of the major political parties. The fourth has been the chairman of the Winnipeg School Board for a number of years and has held senior positions in the executive of one of the major political parties. The fifth is presently the vice-president of that same party, and is the funnel through which you get the ear of the Prime Minister out of this province.

Now under this kind of an atmosphere my chances of not being smitten were pretty slim indeed, I think. And there's no question about it, these were very real factors, where my interests were at least nurtured, although not begun.

Many a political activity is, for me, an extra-curricular interest, or a hobby, if you like. Some of you may play musical instruments, or garden, or build model railroads, or something like that, and devote some of your spare time to that. You may spend great amounts of time doing so. I spend part of my time, free time, in this activity which happens to interest me, and I don't know that there is anything particularly Christian or non-Christian about that. Hence the seeking of an avocational interest for the use of some of my time is also an element for me. Now how much time one should devote to an avocation is a little hard to determine. It has been suggested to me that perhaps I spend more time with politics than with church work. I like to think I don't. But if it were so, then I don't think the problem would lie in the nature of the avocational interest, since I could as easily go fishing on a Sunday morning as go to a political meeting, and who is to say where my soul would be in the greater danger. And in this area

I have always said that our brotherhood has found a certain number of people who tend to use church work itself as a hobby as distinct from a real sense of dedication service. Now I'm also asked if I'm not in politics for the money that is in it. This is a kind of many-faceted question. My direct answer would be 'no', both for myself and for people in my profession. Were I a manufacturer or a contractor, who depended primarily on government contracts to keep me going, the answer might well be different. But for a lawyer this is simply, nor can't be, the case. I am maybe best illustrate that by a personal example, if you don't mind.

Now you've all heard of the political payoff, of party supporters getting jobs when their candidate is successful, and I'm inclined to think the morality of it is not entirely despicable, although of course it can be. But I have been associated with one political party now for something like 15 years, and I've devoted time, effort and money to it, in varying measure throughout. I've received just one pay-off, if you want to call it that—recognition, as they put it—throughout all of that time. It was an appointment to act as the solicitor for the Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation in about 50 mortgage loans all of which came at one time. Now that brought me a gross income of something like \$8000. To handle these I had to hire an additional staff member of a cost, over that period, of about \$5000. It required equipment that I would otherwise not have had to get, but which of course I still have, that cost about another \$1500. Then of course there are all the other items of overhead that any businessman will know about. Now in the end, I doubt whether I netted \$1000 directly, out of all of this thing. Of course I still had to do the work for which I was presumably paid. I think that's pretty small payment for 15 years of effort, whatever the amount could have been.

Now that's just sort of an illustration of how it works. But then of course it also works another way, a way that makes money by selling time and that means he must have people who are prepared to buy it. And to get those he must become known to them and political activity, I suppose, is one of the ways in which you can do this. But I think it's a pretty inefficient way because you have to remember that about three-quarters of the other people that are involved in this activity are also lawyers and they are all looking for the same thing that you're looking for. So from that aspect it is indeed much better for me to join entirely non-political organizations such as country clubs or churches. For that matter, a meeting such as this can conceivably benefit me financially, however indirectly. And it's a very difficult thing to sort out where the pursuit of the dollar which we justified with eloquence earlier in this Conference, begins or ends, or even hard at times to decipher our own motives because of our considerable ability to rationalize, all too often, in the name of the Lord.

Now I think I can truthfully say that the pursuit of financial



advancement is a pretty negligible factor for me, personally, and I think for most people who engage in political activity.

We get to the area next that you probably would anticipate and which I have referred to as a conditioned response, and that's the element of offering Christian service and principle in an arena that is not noted for its abundance. I think I can truthfully say this is a very real motive with me though you might object to my saying it. But government, after all, does afford an opportunity to create a better society and this is so in many different arenas. Social betterment, for example, and the state has gotten to do these a lot better than the churches have in a good many instances. In this area, also, lie some of the greatest concerns that I would have for myself in political activity and for others. Politics brings out the best and the worst in people and people who may be very fair and openminded in other respects become narrow and bigoted and downright dishonest when they get into political activity. At the same time they arise to tremendous heights of self-sacrifice in the name of John Diefenbaker or Pierre Elliott Trudeau. In short, politics evokes a strength of opinion and emotion that few other activities do, and there are certain dangers in that.

There are further the dangers in compromise and I will end my little discourse on that note. I should say that in a complex interdependent society you have to govern by consensus. That involves compromise. For the Christian this is very difficult because it may mean compromises that we shouldn't make. I would just leave with you this as being a problem area for further discussion; here lies the largest danger for people like myself and others.

## INFLUENCE IN POLITICS

by Walter Kroeker\*

It is with some reluctance that I agreed to discuss this subject. First of all I am not a politician even though I do have political beliefs and convictions which I, occassionally, discuss, either with or without provocation. Second, I am not a lobbyist, although it has been my privilege and responsibility on many occasions to present points of view to government at both the provincial and federal level. My experience, such as it is, falls under three categories.

One, as a technical advisor in the fields of agriculture, international trade and tarriff, mostly at the federal level; two, as a member of the provincial government commission; third, as a radio broadcaster.

The broadcasting function has been, by far, the most rewarding in terms of effective Christian witness, as well as significant sociological, as differentiated from economic, results. It was in this sector that my assignment for this conference specifically included a case history pertinent to this discussion, and illustrates the useful means of achieving influence on legislation.

In January of 1964, it was announced that the Manitoba Government might introduce legislation that would liberalize the liquor advertising laws in this province. A few days later a prominent news story in the daily paper stated that the proposed changes would be supported unanimously by the broadcasting stations in Manitoba. Partly to set the record straight, but principally to give leadership to those opposing the new proposed laws, Radio Southern Manitoba embarked on an intensive editorial campaign. This campaign left no room for doubt as to our position in the matter. Emphasis was placed on three main issues: 1. The effect on young people, in that liquor advertising would be one of the educational influences shaking their lives. 2. That in liberalizing advertising laws, government would actually be working against its own Manitoba Committee on Alcohol Education. 3. The advantage of additional revenues for the province would be nullified by the expense of social evils which would increase as a result of more advertising and more drinking in the province.

The twelve-day editorial campaign brought an overwhelming

\* Mr. Kroeker has been agricultural advisor to the PEI provincial premier, acts on numerous federal agricultural commissions, and is chairman of the Board which administrates Radio Southern Manitoba. He gave the substance of this article in an address on the occasion of a Pastors'-Laymen's Conference, hosted by MBBC in 1969.

response of petitions supporting our views with a total of 12,000 signatures. On February 14, 1964, we presented these petitions to the Premier and the Attorney General of Manitoba and shortly thereafter the government announced that it was shelving its plans in the matter. No further official government action was taken for another 3 years. Early in 1967 the government introduced legislation which, if passed, would have removed practically all provincial controls over broadcast advertising of alcoholic beverages. Radio Southern Manitoba spoke to members of the legislature and to church and civic leaders, reiterating its position but did not editorialize at that time. I appeared before the law-amendment committee of the legislature and presented the brief on behalf of our station and its listeners. An indication of the direction which we took may be seen in a short excerpt from our brief and which illustrates the social rather than the religious arguments we presented, and I quote:

“We are concerned over the identification of sports and sports events with liquor advertising. We all know how great an impact the endorsement of sports news have on young impressionable minds and where liquor advertising is permitted this association is fully exploited. It is shameful that a healthy interest in sports, and in the development of sound bodies, is being used against our young people as an instrument for their destruction. The impact of the broadcast media upon young people is a powerful one. The radio is a constant companion of our teenagers. Radio constitutes one of the major influences that mold their character, develop their personalities, and direct their lives. Surely you cannot seriously and deliberately contemplate making radio an influence that will condition children to an eager anticipation of the advertised pleasures of drinking through the process of psychological brainwashing.”

There were, of course, many other representations, pro and con, but the end result was that we achieved a major modification in the bill so that no liquor advertising was permitted before 10:00 p.m.

At the Western Association of Broadcasters' annual meeting in June of 1967, strategies were planned for further assaults on the remaining restrictions in all three prairie provinces and we expect more problems in the future. But in the meantime many young people will be spared the influence and impact of liquor advertisements. Some of the side-effects of our campaign may be of interest here. That our relations with other stations became rather strained and that they remain so is understandable. There were losses of revenue in completely unrelated fields because of hostility on the part of advertising agencies who also carried brewery accounts. Although we received many letters of support, the only one from within our Mennonite Brethren constituency came from the Mennonite Brethren Bible College. In the face of what I

interpreted as indifference at the time, I concluded that my personal encounter with alcohol and my experience of God's special grace with this problem, had made me more sensitive to the dangers than those to whom it was more or less academic. There are a number of other observations regarding representation to government that might serve as topics for further discussion.

1. A small segment of the population can have a significant effect on government, far beyond its relative importance. Dedication is the key. B. Baerg already referred to this in relation to labor unions, where in the case of an apathetic majority, as few as 10 percent of the membership exercise effective control. In our elections often less than 50 percent of the voters are exercising their franchise.

2. We are living in the golden age of minorities. We all know that only minorities can get their views expressed on national television. An example: one dedicated woman, an atheist, succeeded in getting the Lord's prayer out of United States public schools. More things are wrought by zealous minorities than this world dreams of.

3. An aimed, pinpointed program by a small marginous group, is more effective than a generalized approach by a large variegated group where the element of dedication and conviction is lost. Not only is it less effective but it frequently involves compromise of principles. An example of this, and I realize that I may be exhibiting the Marie Antoinette syndrom, is the participation by our ministers in ministerial associations that include non-believers. The ultimate in this direction, for which I can find no extenuation whatsoever, is our participation with Moslems, Buddhists, etc., in a Centennial Religious Council.

4. Our representations to government should express, or be compatible with, our Christian witness. This excludes a narrow or selfish advantages and is good for the community at large. Of current interest is the discussion of taxation of church property. Real estate holdings of some churches or denominations are indeed vast, far beyond their workable educational needs, and present tax-exemptions are creating a heavy burden on the tax payers. I would not justify joining with other denominations in a legal battle to protect our privileged position. I am convinced that we are not so justified. This does not mean that I look forward to paying realty taxes for church property, but I do believe that our spiritual impact can and will be lost with participation in such joint efforts. If we are apathetic and indifferent to our civic duty, are we justified in going to government for action? Can we realistically pray for God's guidance to government when we do nothing to focus Christian influences into government affairs?

For my final observation I want to point to the ideal way of influencing politicians as it is recorded for us in Luke 19—“And

Jesus entered Jericho and as he crossed it there was a man named Zacchaeus, a chief tax collector and wealthy, who tried to see who Jesus was but as he could not on account of the crowd, and he was short, he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree to see him, for he was about to pass that way. As Jesus reached the spot he looked up and said to him, 'Zacchaeus come down quickly for I am due to stay at your home today.' And he hurried down and heartily welcomed him. All who looked on complained that he was gone to be guest of a sinner. Zacchaeus paused and said to the Lord, 'See Lord. I will give half of my belongings to the poor. If I have defrauded anyone with anything I will pay it back fourfold.' Jesus said, pointing to him, 'Today salvation is come to this home, as this man too is the son of Abraham.'"

Jesus effected a drastic policy reversal in Jericho through the spiritual rebirth of a politician.

If we let the vital force of clear Christian witness operate in and through our lives we will indeed have great impact on proud politicians and on legislation.

## POVERTY AND THE CHRISTIAN

A View of Man from a theological perspective

by Vern Ratzlaff\*

### Man in Defection from his true self

Social problems such as poverty are precisely that—social, i.e. they involve man. And to the extent that man is one of the observables in any experiment or controlled situation, to that extent man must be reckoned with. Poverty is one particular instance of the need to consider man, for to the extent that man is always to be found as part of the set of phenomena termed "poverty," to that extent man must be seen as either a gratuitous and superfluous element within the set of phenomena (just as the colour of sweater worn by a laboratory worker investigating moon rock samples is irrelevant to the geological conclusions drawn), or else man is a very important element of the total range of observables. We suggest the latter. Poverty is more than the economic, social and physical descriptions of an environment; it involves man, and man is one of the important factors in adequately accounting for the observed phenomena.

Our view of man, of course, will help to determine the role to which we assign man in the observed set of phenomena. A view which sees man as a highly complex collection of economic drives, which reduces man to a syndrome of economically-derived impulses and reactions, will see both the problems and the solution (control of economic factors) in a way different from the view which sees man as being made up of impulses which seek to establish ego-control over other objects/people, and which sees the problem and the solution (psychological manipulation/massage) in its own terms.

The Judaeo-Christian view of man admits the strength of each of such views, and more not adduced here, but holds a view of man which does not see him reduced to a set of economic, power, sexual, or cause-effect factors. Our view sees man in defection from that which he was intended for and set to. Created by God in God's image, man was intended to operate in relations with others in accordance with trust, understanding and concern. The image of God, the *zelem* and/or *demuth* of Genesis 1:26, is on this view the ability of individuals to relate to other individuals openly, without imputing motives, with honesty, without regard

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to self-protection. This is what man was intended for, and it is defection from this—a defection consciously and unconsciously enacted by each individual—that creates conditions such as those this paper is concerned with.

The Judaeo-Christian view of man's defection from his true self involves the following consequences.

a. **pride**

Man prides himself as constituting the centre of being; he becomes "the measure of all things"; he establishes his own private autonomy, excluding others from the right to claims on himself, on his personality. It is the attitude embodied in the powerful works of Ayn Rand, of her *Ethics of Egoism*, where identity is sought in pursuing a self-oriented quest. We, however, believe that man cannot find himself until he discovers God and others in significant encounter.

b. **meaninglessness**

Emphasis on ego assertion has two basic results: it shrinks the real self of the person practising it, it robs members of his society of their own dignity. When each seeks his own satisfaction, then the sense of community and the warmth of inter-relationships evaporate; then the awareness that we are "man" (generically) is lost. This results in alienation of man from man (from society), of man from the structures of his society; it is man not seeing himself as a meaningful individual in a society which stresses the contribution rather than the contributor. Man in defection from his true self has lost the ability to relate to others, and with this loss comes a loss of meaning. Meaningful existence comes only as the individual sees himself needed, and related to as an individual and not as a thing. Defection from the true self results in the loss of the I-Thou relationship, substituting for it the I-It relationship, as Buber trenchantly phrases it.

c. **anomie**

Meaninglessness, a loss of relatedness to man and to society, results in the destruction of norms, social and political, accepted on the basis of their contribution to making possible a full life. The breakdown of these norms (or mores, or social expectations) casts the person adrift, for he knows of no societal expectations which he should adopt for their intrinsic value. Rather, in defection from true self, bandied about in a society where ego-assertion emphasizes self-defined goals and achievements, the only norms accepted are those which naked force imposes. A rootlessness in terms of lack of moral commitment to standards, patterns of belief/behaviour, result: anomie.

The Judaeo-Christian view of man, which finds its origin in the concept of man's being created by God in God's image, and which looks to Jesus as "the man for others," sees the preceding three-fold syndrome reflected in our society.

## Interrelation of man and social structures

Just as the description of society requires a working concept of man to account adequately for the observed data, so man must be seen in terms of society; he cannot be abstracted from it and discussed without reference to it. Wherever man is found, he is found in society. To understand man, we must see him in his society where he shows himself.

### Suggestion and Resume

Since man in defection frequently loses a sense of the meaningfulness of life, of existence, this will be reflected in his attitude to work. The Judaeo-Christian concept of work does not see work negatively; man was given the responsibility of mastering his environment, of subduing it and making it his own—recognizing, of course, that he held it only in trust from God (i.e. man was a steward, not the owner) (Genesis 1:29-31, 2:16-20). But man's defection from this goal makes work a monotony, a drudge; he cannot see how his activities relate to the original mandate to act as a responsible steward. So as man is seen in his employment, he refuses to function as intended. Instead of seeing himself as part of the continuing creative process, he concentrates on opting out of that process as quickly as possible, either by demands for more leisure time or by refusing to participate altogether. Others, intent on maximizing profits on their investments, also forget the role they were created for—to act as stewards of the raw materials and the managerial skills they possess. Man, in defection from his true self, has destroyed the meaningfulness of work, of employment.

a. **employment**

Because of some factors out of his control, such as death in the family, lack of education, etc., man cannot contribute as his society (which tends to see values defined by contribution, not contributor) stipulates. Thus, the single-earner family, the technologically-deficient, the chronically ill, because they cannot contribute, constituting the some 25% of low-income families (Economic Council of Canada, *Fifth Annual Review*, 1968), do not fit in with the expectations of man in defection from his true self, whose evaluation of others is determined by their contributions. In brief, it is not the socially dislocated who are a problem; it is **the view taken of them** that constitutes the problem.

The Judaeo-Christian view holds, then, that man is tragically alienated from himself; that this alienation results in egoism; that this egoism results in society's **malaise**, and more particularly in the question of poverty which is our concern here.

b. **social dislocation**

Is there no solution? The Christian community asserts that there is a solution, insofar as man recognizes his alienation and defection, and by the example and life of Jesus (ecce homo!) has the image of God restored in him. Viewing man from the incorrect

perspective (reducing him to an economic, social, sexual or power-motivated set of drives) will not resolve the situation in which he is both caught and responsible for. For governments to grapple with the problem, there must be awareness of the fact that one's view of man will colour the solution suggested, the cure attempted.

We have heard that the poor must mount pressure, organize, make their rights heard via lobbies. We suggest that this perpetuates the problem, since this accedes to the egoist view of man which sees society only as competing power structures. To the extent that a replacement of existing power structures by other power structures is not the only alternative, the following might be regarded as having merit in that they attempt action while remembering full well what the view of man in defection from his true self involves:

- a. inter-community, inter-governmental, inter-organizational approaches in the inner-city, hard core area of poverty; approaches must recognize basic dilemma of man's alienation from himself and his society
- b. employer practices where the technologically deficient, the socially dislocated, the ethnically spat-upon can receive attention which recognizes their individuality

But we would stress that approaches which neglect to take what we consider a fundamental view of man (who and what he is) into account, cannot hope to help adequately those intended to be helped.

Ἐν ἑστῆ ἡ ἰσχύς  
καὶ ἡ λήθη ἡ πρὸς  
τὸν Θεόν, καὶ οὐκ ἔστι  
ὁ λόγος αὐτῶν ἡ  
ἑστῆ πρὸς τὸν  
καὶ τὸν αὐτὸν ἑστῆ,  
καὶ τὸν αὐτὸν ἑστῆ,  
οὐκ ἔστι ἡ ἑστῆ.

## THE PREACHING LAB

conducted by J. Regehr

### A. Getting the theme

1. I am asked to speak to a youth group—a graduation banquet, to be exact. The evening is to centre around Matthew Arnold's poem, "Dover Beach."
2. I am surprised at the choice. Shall I a) discard their wish? or b) lash them for it in my address? or c) try to see the poem as they see it, and thus understand their choice and, hopefully, empathize?
3. I decide on the latter (since I have a pastor's heart), read the poem carefully, and remember that I liked the poem immensely when I studied and taught it.
4. I look for elements in the poem with which the young folk would identify:
  - a. the romantic (surely that is understandable) —  
"The sea is calm tonight.  
The tide is full, the moon lies fair  
Upon the straits."
  - b. the adolescent inarticulate yearning (I have not forgotten this fuzzy longing for the infinite!) —  
"Listen! you hear the grating roar  
Of pebbles which the waves draw back, and fling,  
At their return, up the high strand,  
Begin, and cease, and then again begin,  
With tremulous cadence slow, and bring  
The eternal note of sadness in"
5. But I will not be true to my calling if I stop here. I must reach deep into the struggle of the poet and help my hearers to see their own situation in the light of it. But more, I must be a spokesman for my Lord in the process.
6. I go to the poem again.
  - a. The poet sees himself as characterized by what he has lost:  
"The Sea of Faith  
Was once, too, at the full, and round earth's shore  
Lay like the folds of a bright girdle fur'd.  
But now I only hear  
It's melancholy, long, withdrawing roar,  
Retreating, to the breath  
Of the night-wind, down the vast edges drear  
And naked shingles of the world."

- b. Instead of seeking to recover what he lost, he dodges the responsibility of living by proposing a cozy miniature paradise in seclusion:

“Ah, love, let us be true  
 To one another! for the world which seems  
 To lie before us like a land of dreams,  
 So various, so beautiful, so new,  
 Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,  
 Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;  
 And we are here as on a darkling plain,  
 Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,  
 Where ignorant armies clash by night.”

7. These last two sections focus the contemporary situation:
- the failure to transmit the Christian faith from father to son;
  - the son's consequent cop-out in the face of heavy Christian responsibility in a hostile world.

## B. Structuring the Theme

- Receiving the faith
  - Our Youth is reflected in the poet:  
 (Use stanza from poem here. A6a above).
    - As a child he was dependent on his father emotionally, spiritually, etc. (Cf. Arnold's poem "Rugby Chapel")
    - His Christian faith was embodied in his father.
    - The search for independence and personal identity which means a weaning from his father, became also a separation from his father's faith. (Cf. "Rugby Chapel")
    - This loss of commitment and faith is evidenced in the youth's approach to jobs, education, professions, etc.
  - Our parents become anxious:
    - Somehow they wish they could keep their youth from a world that will threaten their childhood faith. But they decide they cannot, and do not really want to.
    - After all, truth is designed for personal growth and freedom. The immature elements of our faith must be shaken out so that true faith can burn brighter. (Try the image of the grates in the old coal stove.)  
 Examples:
      - "God answers prayer." Dad said so. But I find him silent.
      - "Jesus is a nice, loving man," Mom said. But I find him extremely demanding.
      - "The Church is a body of saints," they said. But I discover they are sinners.
- Truth will shake the immature elements out of our

ethics and allow us to make deeply responsible choices in love under God.

- We trust truth, and we would not keep youth from it in the hope of retaining an immature Christian faith.
- c. But we do ask them to take a stand.
- Stand firmly on that which is firm—Jesus Christ. He is the door, way, vine, bread, life, light, truth.
  - Stand firmly against all that is sinful and destructive, both in society and for yourself.
- d. Then instead of echoing the poet's plaintive wistfulness, you can speak with confidence.  
 (Find passages from the Word that echo your own assurance of faith and confidence in the God revealed in Jesus.)
- Facing responsibility  
 (Use excerpt from poem here. A6b above)
    - The poet is right.
      - The world is a rough place  
 (Relate his words to today's scene: struggle, flight, confusion, clash, night, etc.)
      - The elements of his dreamworld are painfully absent.  
 (Relate his words to our world: joy, love, light, certitude, peace.)
    - But the poet is wrong.  
 Jesus did not advocate seeking out a pretty wife, withdrawing from harsh reality, and building a miniature utopia in seclusion. Listen! John 17:18-19 etc. (Introduce other Scripture with a similar thrust.)
    - We have become members of a kingdom of joy, love, light, certitude, peace. We are called to establish this kingdom in our world. In this way we will bring "help for pain."

## Conclusion

Therefore,  
 take a stand,  
 and get with it!

P.S. Now I must find a suitable concise articulation of the theme which can serve as a title: "It's Lovely Here, Isn't It?"

P.P.S. In the introduction I will acknowledge the feelings they have on this occasion. I will not judge them, but will lead them on to the greater issues of life.

P.P.P.S. I resolve again not to disregard the poet (and the novelist) as I allow other men's minds to alert me to issues of deeply spiritual import.



## BOOK REVIEWS

**Modern Art and the Death of a Culture**, by H. R. Rookmaaker.  
London: Inter-Varsity Press, 1970.

An excellent book!

Have you ever wondered about the "meaning" of a painting by Picasso, or the "message" in some rather garish-looking modern abstract? Or whether a painting of a madonna and child is truly scriptural? Or whether the arts have anything to do with morality? Why are there so few religious paintings created in our generation? If the arts are important to society, what is their message? What is the role of the artist? Are Christians affected by the arts of their day? Has the church any responsibility in the area of the fine arts? Should a Christian have anything to do with jazz? Is a painting of a nude immoral?

It is a pity this book wasn't available 20 years ago, when the whole matter of higher education and its implications for the Christian was a live issue. For those of us interested in various aspects of the fine arts, and who were convinced that God was calling us into artistic realms, this book would have been an invaluable aid in helping to clarify our views about the relationship between Christianity and the arts. The church gave us no help at the time; even today our conference has no guidelines for Christians who are involved in the arts. That is not unusual.

The churches in general, and especially the Evangelical groups as such, have largely ignored what was going on in the arts, and generally implied that it was very secular, dangerous, and lacking in any significance, for Christians. In fact, in our own circles I have often heard the expression used that "Kunst ist vom Teufel" (Art is of the devil).

What is particularly helpful in this discussion of the problems inherent in the arts, is the fact that the author is a committed, mature Christian, familiar with the life of the church, but concerned also with the Christian witness through the medium of the arts. He is Professor in History of Art at Free University, Amsterdam. He is also a member of the L'Abri Fellowship, associated with Dr. Francis Schaeffer. He has written several books and numerous articles on art; has edited re-issues of old jazz, blues and spirituals; and is a member of the programming committee

of the Dutch national radio and the Board of Censors of Films in Holland. He was visiting lecturer at Regent College, Vancouver, during the summer session, 1970. The author is thus able to speak with authority about the arts from a Christian perspective.

The book is obviously addressed to those interested in the arts, but it has real value for all those who want to know more about the relationship between Christian faith and the arts, and about the ultimate meaning of the arts for mankind. It also has great value as a short course in the understanding and appreciation of paintings, and how one can get at the deeper meaning of a work of art. Since most of us have a rather irregular and haphazard acquaintance with various paintings from different historical periods, the condensed but fairly comprehensive discussion given to representative paintings from the different eras are most helpful. The author feels this historical approach is necessary for an understanding of the impasse reached in the area of culture and the arts today.

Theologians and pastors would find his discussion of the various principles underlying any work of art very helpful in relating the arts to a faith in God and in the world as God made it. The book should receive an even warmer welcome from Christian artists who must grapple with artistic truth and revealed truth, and how the latter should find expression in their art. Rookmaaker has indicated this concern in his introduction: "This book has also been written with the needs of the younger artists in mind, particularly Christian artists. I am very aware that

the issues at stake are not just cultural and intellectual, but spiritual. What is involved is a whole way of thinking that leaves out of account, and so largely negates, vital aspects of our humanity and our understanding of reality. Christians today must understand the spirit of the age."

The discussion is often wide-ranging, for Rookmaaker believes that the spirit of an age can be discovered in all its aspects. The philosophical premises which underly the spirit of an age are examined and discussed, especially those involving the major shift from a supernatural to a scientific view of reality associated with the Age of Reason.

The final chapter, entitled **Protest, Revolution and the Christian Response** is an attempt to urge the church and the individual Christian artist to accept the challenge of the arts and to show more concern for the artistic media and their impact on society. It is here that Rookmaaker makes his most valuable contributions.

Peter Klassen

**The Concept of the Believers' Church**, by James Leo Garrett, Jr. (ed.). Scottsdale: Herald Press, 1970. Pp. 344. \$7.95.

In June, 1967, 450 years after Luther posted his 95 theses, 150 theologians and academicians representing 26 denominations in the "free church" tradition, gathered at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary (Louisville, Kentucky) to discuss the "meaning and the contemporary significance of the Believers' Church." **The Concept** contains the texts of the thirteen conference addresses given at that time (three of them by Mennonite and Brethren in Christ educators). The addresses focused on four areas: a believing people, a people in community, a people under the Word, and a people in the world; Franklin Littell had the introductory paper on "The Concept of the Believers' Church." To give even cursory mention of the tremendous theological and educational wealth which the addresses afford, would require far greater a compass of writing than is possible here. I found each paper—together with the resume of its respondents—packed with information which made for a better understanding of the church. Of particular interest were the papers by Littell and by MacDonald. Littell reiterated what he considered the marks of the believers' church to be: it is Christ's (i.e. it is not ethnic), membership is voluntary and "witting" (i.e. conscious), separation is basic (i.e. we must beware of culture-religion), mission and witness are key concepts, church discipline is stressed, the relationship to the secular is emphasized (i.e. recognition of the limits of the creaturely).

MacDonald, a Pentecostal minister, emphasized that the church is the Community of the Spirit "under the Leadership of Jesus Christ" (p 162), which implies that it (the Community) is the basis of Christian ethics (cf. I Cor. 6), denies sacerdotalism (e.g. apostolic succession), sacramentalism, and spiritualism and universalism. This latter emphasis on the visibility of the church is a much needed one in our time, when the myth of the invisible church is once more coming to the fore.

Mennonite contributors to this anthology were John Howard Yoder and J. Lawrence Burkholder; the editor, James Garrett, is Professor of Christian Theology at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville.

Vern Ratzlaff

Norris Yates, **Guenter Grass, A Critical Essay**

(Contemporary Writers in Christian Perspective.)

Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1967. \$ .95 (ppr)

Guenter Grass is perhaps one of those contemporary writers whose success still puzzles many people. Grass' novels are long,

his verbosity is tiring, and the over-abundance of obscenities become sickening. Yet—his books are bestsellers! It is this last fact which compels us to comment on this controversial author. To be more or less informed, I have read Grass' major works and more than twenty critical essays by German authors. I stress German authors here because they would appear to be better qualified to judge a German writer. Foreign critics have a tendency to rely on critical essays about an artist, rather than on the artist's work itself.

What is the German critics' verdict on G. Grass? They are almost equally divided into strong pro-Grass men and those who reject him on the basis of his irresponsible use of obscenity in his works. Thus Enzesberger and many others stress only Grass' potential as a writer, while his opponents maintain that "this author has developed into a master of pornography of whom it could not be said that he raises the reader to a higher level, as real poets should do." (Translated from **Von Buch zu Buch, guenter Grass in der Kritik**, ed. G. Loschuetz, Verlag Luchterhand, p. 49)

The German Rundfunk has been highly critical of Grass; the "Berliner Welle" has commented (Nov. 21, 1963): "The cancer of decadence has destroyed the natural vigour of Grass' language." (transl.)

Why would an author persistently fill his works with objectionable language? Those defending Grass would point out to us that one cannot paint the devil with mild colours. Grass says: "I am proving that it is possible, and even better, to live without ideals." (**Von Buch zu Buch**, p. 99) Since he does not believe in ideals, there is no point in demanding of him that he raise man to a higher moral level (an ideal). Secondly, Grass simply insists that modern man is deformed mentally and morally, just like Oskar, one of his main characters, the dwarf and hunchback, drummer and blasphemer. **This demonic character represents modern man**, as Grass sees him. Oskar is the "model" of society. In **Die Blechtrommel**, (**The Tin Drum**) Oskar says:

Kunst ist Anklage, Ausdruck, Leidenschaft! Kunst, das ist schwarze Zeichenkohle, die sich auf weisses Papier zermuerbt. Dieser zermuerbenden Kunst gab ich das Model ab . . . . Verzweifelt Nachtschwarzer Ausdruck . . . , ich, Oskar, druecke das zerstoerte Bild des Menschen anklagend, herausforderd, zeitlos und dennoch den Wahnsinn unseres Jahrhunderts ausdrueckend aus . . . . Zeichnet ihn nicht den Krueppel, schlachtet ihn, kreuzigt ihn mit Kohle aufs Papier. (p. 555)

But in spite of all, Grass seems to suggest that Oskar (man), divided, confused and tortured by sin, is not yet wholly lost. Oskar continues in his deliberation:

Den Rasputin in dir haben die jungen Musensoehne . . . .



erkannt; of sie wohl jemals jenen in dir schlummernder.  
Goethe entdecken, erwecken . . . zu Papier bringen? (p.556)  
The overemphasis upon sex in modern society is obvious (Rasputin)  
will man ever find his balance again by re-discovering his higher  
calling, his mental gift, his creative power (Goethe)? The symbol-  
ism is not too difficult.

This much by way of introduction to Grass. However anybody  
attempting to understand this controversial author should read  
Guenter Grass, *A Critical Essay*, by Norris W. Yates. This book  
belongs to the *Contemporary Writers in Christian Perspective*  
series. Yates is professor of literature at Iowa State University. His  
judgement may appear less critical than mine, but he is certainly  
an expert on Grass and deserves to be read by those genuinely  
interested in Grass and his "image of modern man."

George Epp

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Theodore Roszak, *The Making of a Counter Culture* — Reflec-  
tions on the technocratic society and its youthful opposition.  
Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1969, 289 pp.  
\$2.25.

The subtitle of the book indicates the intent of the author. He  
tries to explain and account for the 'generation gap' and inter-  
generational conflict in America. His thesis is that 'technocracy',  
which views reality strictly in terms of scientific-economic cate-  
gories, has permeated North American society to such an extent  
that the conventional methods of 'power politicking' are insufficient  
to check its influence. For that reason, youth of today resort to a  
'radical' rejection of the 'establishment.'

Roszak chooses to analyze the youth movement on the level of  
'culture,' which is more encompassing than say the political or  
social level. Anthropologists claim that every culture exhibits a  
'basic premise' around which all cultural traits revolve. This basic  
premise is an assumption (sometimes called a 'myth') that is  
considered to self-evident and authentic that to defent it would be  
to degrade it. In fact most members of that culture would not  
believe that anyone in his right mind could ever question the  
validity of that premise. This premise is the foundation upon  
which elaborate systems of thought and behavior are built. Roszak's  
decision to analyze the youth movement on this level reflects his  
belief that it represents a fundamental deviation from the basic  
premise of the dominant culture. What are the basic premises of  
the culture and the counter culture?

A technocratic culture is characterized by a crassly material-  
istic view of life and reality. That which can be perceived, enjoyed,  
manipulated, etc. by means of the physical senses and human  
reason is highly valued. Consequently, human reason, intellect,

science, objectivity, empiricism, etc. are pillars of our culture.  
Intellectual energies are applied primarily in the production of  
commodities that cater to the physical desires of man. And the  
efficient production of these commodities has called for occupa-  
tional specialization, expertise, impersonalness, etc. It has further  
resulted in elaborate economic, educational, political and social  
structures which are all geared to support the basic premise.  
Even a complex system of rationalizations has emerged to justify  
the hot pursuit of material values to the exclusion of others. It  
is a mentality which Roszak calls "objective consciousness" that  
exalts 'objectivity' and is virtually unable to be conscious of and  
appreciate non-objective virtues.

The counter culture is primarily a reaction to the lack of  
personalness in the above-elucidated mentality and system. Hence,  
'personalness' has become the basic premise of youthful opposition  
to the establishment. The desire to do "your own thing" is para-  
mount. In its practical ramifications the two cultures represent  
"the opposition of reason and passion, intellect and feeling, the  
head and the heart." (p. 76) This explains the counter culture's  
rejection of classical 'Leftist' and capitalistic ideologies alike, be-  
cause both of them exalt the 'system' above the individual person.  
Oriental religions, occultism and magic, on the other hand, support  
'personalness' as the basic premise, and hence, their affinity to  
the present youth movement. Psychedelic drugs, too aid in the  
expansion of personal awareness and fulfillment, they say. But  
magic and drugs provoke behavior that is so radically different  
from the organized, rational, reliable, impersonal, predictable way  
of life fostered by technocracy. Roszak explicitly favors the basic  
premise of the counter culture, but he also has some harsh words  
for the excesses and vulnerabilities of the movement.

The author strikes an authentic chord in his critique of the  
crass materialism that has virtually intoxicated our society to the  
extent of seriously impairing its powers of discernment. This has  
resulted in an insensitivity to the 'wonder' and richness in relation-  
ships that lie beyond the reach of the naked eye. The emphasis  
on 'personalness' too, is authentic and refreshing, but also a little  
alarming. It does in fact make man the measure of all things and  
allows for no self-sacrifice to a greater cause. That is basically  
selfishness. Such a personalness is hardly any more authentic than  
the impersonalness of a technocratic culture. The counter culture  
and the author fail to understand that true personalness is best  
served by a personal commitment to an **authentic** cause and/or  
person greater than oneself.

Roszak's book reflects basically a humanistic, not a Christian,  
perspective. It offers a keen insight into the inhumaneness of our  
society which is encapsuled in a cultural mentality of objective and  
materialistic consciousness.

Henry Regehr

**Government and Economic Policy and Individual Welfare**, by Harold Gram. St. Louis: Concordia, 1970. Pp. 133. \$1.50.

**The Age of Technology**, by Hubert Beck. St. Louis: Concordia, 1970, Pp. 133. \$1.50.

These excellent additions to Concordia's "The Christian Encounters" series focus the need to think deeply of our responsibilities as Christian citizens. In Gram's **Government**, the first three-quarters deal with an analysis of the role government plays in taxation; how taxation policies affect and reflect employment, national priorities, business expansion, savings and inflation. In the final pages he pinpoints the need for the church to have an "ethical concern about consumption . . . about the relationship of consumption to the sense of a Christian community" (p 86,87). Further, he emphasizes that our sense of stewardship involves our examining "the choices between the use of resources to relieve poverty or to build an atomic arsenal" (p 89). His major point is summed up when he talks about the Christian's need for "A different view of property", and to abandon the self-righteousness associated with possessions"; he develops the concept of community, which "means that the Christian through taxes or reduced individual prosperity can share the cost of bearing another's burdens" (p 92, 93). (Compare **that** with Ayn Rand's **Ethics of Egoism!**) "The tools of macroeconomics are ethically neutral, but the goals toward which they are directed need to be subjected to Christian concern" (p 94).

Beck in **Age of Technology** presents the social consequences of technology: passion for power, fear, complexity of life, solitary confinement, understanding gap. The answer to this alienation, Beck feels, is the sense of community which the church is able to bring to alienated man. His "Epilog" is a fine affirmation of the hope of the Christian for community, and he relates this hope (i.e. the resurrection of Jesus) to the strands he has exposed earlier.

Both titles are excellent contribution to this outstanding series which includes Christian perspectives on crime, painting, ethics and family life.

Vern Ratzlaff

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**Change in the Church** by Paul Kraybill. Scottdale, Herald Press, 1970. Pp. 29. \$0.50.

No. 19 in the Focal Pamphlet series, **Change** is a mediocre addition to the series in light of the hard hitting, thought-provoking and action-inducing issues that have preceded it (e.g. **The Christian Calling**, No. 6; **Evangelicalism and Social Responsibility**, No. 16). Kraybill points out that our present structures are the

result of change: earlier generations resisted Sunday school and Vacation Bible school, revivals, church schools, missionary societies, Christian education; "we have had a history of change" (p 12), however. To accommodate change today, we need to listen to the one with new ideas, we must recognize the "fellowship of caring," we must cultivate flexibility in our responses, and we must establish our goals as a brotherhood. **Change** should have—after serious editing—appeared as an article in the **Gospel Herald**; the Focal series deserves better.

Vern Ratzlaff