

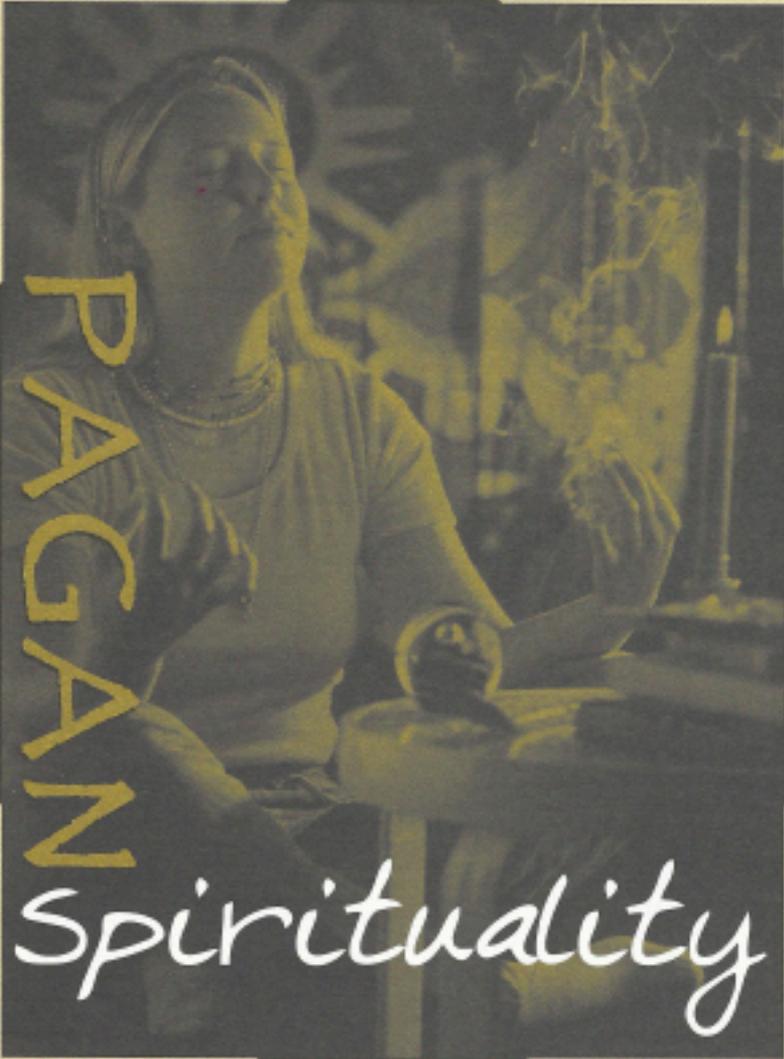
The Outlook



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PAGGAN

Spirituality

Pagan Spirituality

Peter Jones

The Great American Revolution

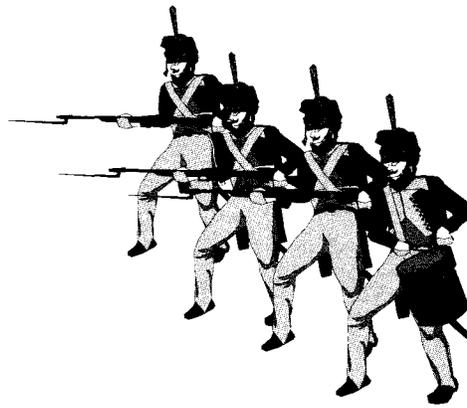
The Red Coats stole your taxes but the "no-coat Hippies" have stolen your soul. In other words, the most radical American Revolution took place not in 1776, but in the last generation of the twentieth century. In these last thirty or so years we have witnessed the First Great Awakening — of Paganism which has deconstructed Western Christendom and produced a radical transformation of once "Christian" America.

How can a culture so blessed with the Gospel go so haywire in so short a time? Vast numbers of red-blooded Americans, including many in prominent positions such as Democratic presidential candidate Bill Bradley, President Bill Clinton, and Vice President Al Gore. All claim a past "born again" *Christian* experience, and are now deep into Deepak Chopra, goddess spirituality, abortion, homosexuality and religious syncretism (all religions lead to God). Christians had better understand what has happened lest we too be swallowed up in this great delusion. And what about evangelism in our over-evangelized nation? How can we speak meaningfully of the Gospel to a culture which still claims to be Christian, even "born again," but is, in practice, increasingly apostate and pagan?

Woodstock, which celebrated its thirtieth anniversary in 1999, was not merely a *sophomoric orgy in the mud*. It was also a *spiritual search for the Garden of Eden*. Behind its anti-war rhetoric, its shameless nakedness and public copulation, and its chemically-induced highs, were the first stirrings of a *radical redefinition of God and Man*. But not to worry! Those marginal hippies who threw off the yoke of authority, sexual boundaries and traditional religion,

along with their grubby coats, would surely disappear from the social radar screen as quickly as hoola hoops and bell-bottom pants, right? Wrong!

Thirty years later we can easily see that our society has gone through possibly one of the most radical sexual and spiritual revolutions in human history. This was a revolution of ideas that appeared to lose, but actually succeeded beyond its



wildest dreams by taking control of the media, the educational system, and the democratic process. Just a generation ago our nation was the bulwark of conservative, family-based, monogamous, heterosexual values, and a modern fortress of the Christian faith. Today the culture boldly embraces many forms of both sexual perversion and pagan mysticism. Many fail to realize that the two — sexuality and spirituality — are intimately related. Indeed, to understand contemporary pagan spirituality, we must see it in the context of a complete worldview, a total package that affects the whole of life.

For revolutions to succeed, the old regime must first be destroyed. Two repentant Berkeley revolutionaries, David Horowitz and Peter Collier, members of the ultra-radical Students for a Democratic Society, recognize how destructive their movement was. They entitled their recently

published account of the movement they helped lead, *Destructive Generation*. True to revolutionary form, the sixties first sought to destroy the old by rejecting: (1) authority, (2) sexual boundaries, and (3) traditional piety.

Revolutionary Destruction

Authority

Behind the revolution has been the rejection of authority per se. Feminism deconstructed the authority structure of patriarchy — the responsible leadership of fathers — by demonizing males, and fathers in particular. Postmodernism deconstructed any and all claims to authority and truth, including, in back of everything, the God of the Bible, removing from the culture any intellectual support for moral values and traditional social structures. These movements come together in the title of a feminist book, *Changing of the Gods* (by Jewish scholar, Naomi Goldenberg, who has since become a witch), and in the feminist war cry: "We women are going to bring an end to God." Ultimately God the Father has to go.

During the sixties a few radical theologians began to speak of the Death of God, though, at the time, most people found their arrogance mostly amusing and their theories far-fetched. But behind the laughter, the movement became a stunning success, for, though they would never say it this way, the God of the Bible, who, they claim, once gave them "new life," is effectively dead for the likes of Messrs Bradley, Clinton and Gore.

Sexual Boundaries

While the above represents a theoretical undermining of a biblical worldview, God, morals, and social structures, the specific destruction of

biblical sexual boundaries involved *practical* transgression. St. Paul calls sexual sins "sin against one's own body."¹ In Romans 1 he describes the same process, how idolatry in the mind gives rise to sexual perversion of the body.² "If it moves, fondle it" became the "liberating" mantra of sexual freedom. Radical feminists demanded their sisters be "sin articulate," have the "courage to sin," and "liberate the inner slut." A popular book on pedagogy among teachers of religion in America has the provocative title: *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*.³

In recent years, the normativity of heterosexuality has been destroyed by the rise of state-protected and promoted homosexuality and bi-sexuality. State-sponsored, legalized homosexual marriage will put the final touches on the social destruction of biblical, creational marriage. If things continue as they are, perversion in all its forms will come out of the closets, and opponents will be locked in them.⁴

Traditional Piety

The last thirty years have witnessed a profound change in the way many look at the church. People have been leaving the religion of their youth in droves. "Organized" religion and official creeds are out. "In" is the personal, autonomous spiritual quest. "Doctrine divides, the Spirit unites," is not only a mantra of liberal ecumenism. Large sections of the evangelical church have made "experience" the touchstone of orthodoxy.

Since pagan spirituality faces an immediate glittering future, we need to understand what makes it tick.

Revolutionary Reconstruction

Given this commitment to high-profile, earth-focused spirituality, our time is thus much more comparable to the world in which the apostle Paul preached the Gospel — a world of pagan religious syncretism and mystical spirituality — than it is to the modern materialistic

and atheistic Marxism we all thought was coming. There is an advantage. Paul's definitions of and answers to pagan spirituality fit our situation so well — those who "exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator who is blessed for ever" (Romans 1:25). There is deep religious worship here, and obvious spirituality.

Why did the sixties go East? The utopian longings could find no religious warrants in biblical orthodoxy. Hence the imperious necessity for hippies with troubled consciences and hungry souls to take trips eastward to exotic places like Katmandu. There were also successful trips West by Eastern gurus teaching mystical meditation. These comings and goings were essential for the religious grounding and the eventual legitimization of the movement. The transgressions and mystical highs of Western hippiedom found their "theological" justification in the age-old belief systems and practices of Eastern paganism.

The hand had met the glove.

The answers from the East gave age-old warrant to Westerners striving to be free from the God of the Bible and still remain "spiritual." All it took was a massive change of worldview.

A New View of God

At the funeral of the God of the Bible at the beginning of the seventies, Professor David Miller triumphantly announced the rebirth of the gods and goddesses of ancient Greece and Rome.⁵ This professor of Religion at Syracuse University stated with great foresight and unabashed glee what would happen at this liberating moment:

...the announcement of the death of God was the obituary of a useless single-minded and one-dimensional norm of a civilization that has been predominantly monotheistic, not only in its religion, but also in its politics, its history, its social order, its

ethics, and its psychology. When released from the tyrannical imperialism of monotheism by the death of God, man has the opportunity of discovering new dimensions hidden in the depths of reality's history.⁶

It took a generation for the implications of this to dawn. Radical feminist theology, as it developed in the seventies and eighties, was read by many unsuspecting church moderates as a relatively innocuous religious version of the contemporary agenda of civil rights. On the contrary, it turned out that these feminist theologians were worthy successors of the *Death of God* theologians, and effective proponents of a deep, pagan spirituality which has nothing or very little to do with civil rights.

The new, triumphant goddess is not the Creator of heaven and earth, but a powerful symbol of the divinity of the earth, and of all those who live on it. Stripped clown, Buddhism's ancient teaching proposes the same view of God:

You're not going to find truth outside yourself ... You become a Buddha by actualizing your own original innate nature. This nature is primordially pure. This is your true nature, your natural mind...it is always perfect, from the beginningless beginning. We only have to awaken to it.⁷

This understanding of God, that fits so well the sixties' demands for freedom and spirituality, explains the great appeal and stunning missionary success of Buddhism in the West in the present time. If you were able to point to a similar Christian phenomenon happening in, say Japan, you would speak of a profound Christian revival. But this infiltration of Buddhism has happened under our noses, in Christian America in this last generation, on our watch.

The ultimate state of freedom from authority is to crown oneself as the ultimate authority. Revolutionaries take power. The sixties revolutionaries

have taken over the power and being of God. As Shirley MacLaine intoned to millions watching her TV special: "I am God, I am God." With power like this, you can do whatever you wish, and no one can deny you your right — which takes us to the next logical point, namely, pagan sexuality.

A New View of Man and Sexuality

The freedom and serenity to transgress the laws of the Creator can only be achieved by changing one's god. Ordained Presbyterian minister, Janie Spahr, magnificently proves the point. Spahr is a well-known lesbian actively campaigning through PLGC (Presbyterians for Lesbian and Gay Concerns) as a "missionary" (her term) for the inclusion of homosexuality in the ordained ministry of the Presbyterian Church USA. Contrasting her movements' ideology with that of orthodox Christianity, she transparently wondered, "Maybe we're talking about a different god."

The original American pagan of the early nineteenth century, Ralph Waldo Emerson, already saw and enthusiastically welcomed the spiritual option articulated by a Japanese Zen master who said of the famous liberal theologian, Paul Tillich (a serious devotee of Buddhism) that, "He was not yet enlightened because he still made the distinction between 'good' and 'evil.'"⁸ Emerson echoes, "No law can be sacred to me but that of my nature. Good and bad are but names very readily transferable to this or that."⁹

This joining of good and evil, often, in pagan theory called the "joining of the opposites," as in the *yin* and the *yang*, has a sexual embodiment: the joining of male and female in the same person, otherwise known as androgyny. Hence the idealization of homosexuality in certain pagan cultures, and the ever-present phenomenon of homosexual priests in pagan religions throughout the world through most of recorded history.

A New View of Spirituality

Writing at the turn of the last century, the Dutch Reformed theologian, Hermann Bavinck, stated: "...the twentieth century...[will] witness a gigantic conflict of spirits...between the old and the new worldview."¹⁰ Though modern journalism often lumps together as a particular social group, "people of faith," the Bible knows nothing of a conflict between spiritual people on the one hand, and materialists on the other. In the Bible, everything is spiritual. So the real conflict is between two forms of spirituality, one inspired by the Spirit of God who gives life, the other by unholy spirits from the domain of death. And make no mistake about it, that unholy spirituality, though counterfeit, is powerful — like the powers of darkness who inspire it.

Pagan ideas are backed up by a power-packed religious experience that captivates and eventually takes captive those who choose to come under its spell. Whether through drugs or various methods of mystical meditation, the adept person experiences ecstasy, literally, out-of-body transport of the soul. One becomes convinced of one's deep belonging with the whole of reality, and of one's sharing in the divine essence of all things. At that moment of the *unio mystica* [mystical union], man becomes God. On such a mind-bending high, issues of right and wrong, or of gender identity, are thoroughly relativized and trivialized, for through mysticism, one has been liberated from the creation's implacable grip. Inclusiveness and tolerance are no longer civic virtues here but deep elements of anti-creational spirituality, the "right" and necessity of divine beings to do and be whatever they please.

Revolutionary Goal — Elimination of Guilt

The Bible is right. Sin is real. Transgressions produce objective consequences, specifically the dull, throbbing pain of real guilt. For this reason, the goal of pagan spirituality is clear, and is stated clearly — *to stifle*

guilt. The English never had this in mind in 1776. Like the IRS, they only wanted to make you feel more guilty and get their hands on your taxes. But this revolutionary goal of contemporary pagan spirituality redefines everything, turning good into evil, and evil into good. This is why the free-love hippies went East. This is why the Hollywood stars of the West love Eastern Buddhism and the Dalai Lama. This is why the occultic "Jesus" who channeled messages to Helen Shucman, author of the best-selling New Age text, *A Course in Miracles*, says to the reader: "Do not make the pathetic error of clinging to the old rugged cross...Your only calling here is to devote yourself with active willingness to the denial of guilt in all its forms."¹¹

Behind all the social and educational programs prohibiting harassment and hate, and promoting love, oneness, inclusiveness, tolerance, and acceptance, is the goal of obliterating guilt. Anything that reminds one of guilt must be eliminated from the throbbing heart of the nation, and the public square. All those speaking of guilt, as Christians do, must be denied access here, for, in the topsy-turvy world of paganism, the Gospel is the ultimate form of "hate speech," for it tells us who we really are.

This "guilt-free" mystical experience of oneness with the divinity of all things is the essence of pagan salvation — *liberation from the Creator*. This is not salvation but a powerful diabolical illusion and delusion. The culture this pagan spirituality spawns will one day inevitably implode — from the untreated disease of sin. Ironically, this *Destructive Generation* will, sooner or later, self-destruct.

How different is Christian salvation (and hence Christian spirituality) which satisfactorily deals with guilt and grants to sinful creatures both *reconciliation* with *the Creator* now and future life for evermore, world without end! But that is another wonderful story — of Gospel truth. (*Pagan Spirituality - cont'd on pg. 6*)

Sola Fide

Paul Settle

A man is justified by faith, apart from works of law...

Romans 3:28

The Reformers discovered from the Scriptures, that sinners are justified by faith alone. They found that faith is more than simply keeping one's chin up, hoping things will get better (trust unattached to an object of trust), and that it is more than merely believing whatever a church or ecclesiastical authority teaches (trusting a church and accepting its dogma without trusting Christ as Savior).

In the Bible, true and living faith is believing God's Word and committing oneself to Him in confident trust. Faith is the soul's intelligent *apprehension* of revealed truth, *acceptance* of the truth as applying to oneself and the answer to one's own need, *appropriation* of the truth as a personal word and invitation from God, and *active trust* in God and His Son. The Reformers emphasized that faith is not just the intellectual acceptance of facts, but, rather, confident trust in the living Christ. "Trust in Christ," says Sinclair Ferguson, "...is the heart of faith. Faith means abiding in Christ (John 15:1-11); it means receiving Christ (John 1:12) and therefore embracing Him in total trust." Faith is turning to and

laying hold on Christ. J. I. Packer recalls the Sunday school acrostic which expresses it perfectly: F-A-I-T-H — "Forsaking All, I Take Him."

The confidence or assurance of faith springs from the consciousness of resting upon the Word of God who "cannot lie" (Titus 1:2). God is trustworthy; He speaks truth; we believe Him and confidently trust Him. "And now, O Lord God, Thou art God, and Thy words are true" (2 Samuel 7:28). Faith starts with the Holy Scriptures which were written by men who were inspired by the Holy Spirit and whose words, therefore, constituted the very Word of God (1 Thessalonians 2:13).

Our experience of faith begins with the Scriptures; but what is faith's source, where does it come from? Faith is a *grace*, a *gift* of God (Ephesians 2:8; Philippians 1:29). It begins (and continues!) as a work of the Spirit of God. Fallen men cannot read and understand the Bible without miraculous assistance. They cannot apprehend or lay hold of truth, nor can they accept and apply it to themselves, or take it to heart as a personal invitation from God. Sinners cannot turn to Christ without God's sovereign, powerful aid. Only when, and not until, the Spirit has turned the heart's light on, can an

unbeliever grasp the realities of the gospel, renounce his sins and sinfulness and come to Christ. In other words, one must be "born again" before he can believe. Faith, therefore *follows* regeneration (John 3:3; 1 Corinthians 2:14; John 6:44, 65; 2 Corinthians 4:4-6; John 3:3-8). We are dead; the Spirit imparts the breath of life; that first breath is faith.

Sinners are linked or united to Christ by faith alone. Faith, by uniting us to Christ, makes all spiritual blessings ours (Ephesians 1:3). So faith is sufficient — nothing else is needed or required. Faith is perfectly adequate to save because it links sinners with a perfectly adequate Savior. We enjoy a perfect salvation because, in God's sight, we are joined to a perfect Savior. When the Philippian jailer asked, "What must I do to be saved?" Paul's answer said it all, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved."

Sola Fide!

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(Pagan Spirituality - cont'd from pg. 5)

This article is reprinted from *Equip*, April/2000.

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Footnotes

¹ 1 Corinthians 6:18.

² Romans 1:18-27.

³ bell hooks, *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom* (New York: Routledge, 1994). The author spells her name without capitals in order to transgress the rules of grammar.

⁴ An insightful phrase I borrow from Rev. Steve Schlissel, a Reformed pastor in New York City.

⁵ Tony Schwartz, *What Really Matters: Searching for Wisdom in America* (New York: Bantam, 1996), vii-x.

⁶ David Miller, *The New Polytheism* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1974), vii. Such a declaration of independence has brought us to the inevitable rendezvous of the Clinton impeachment trial. Beyond all the partisan politics, we are witnessing the public showdown of two competing worldviews. How interesting to note that on Public Radio on January 26, 1999, the commentator Margot Adler (who is also a witch and author of *Drawing Down the Moon*) discussing the Senate

impeaching hearings of President Clinton, noted the clash of two views of truth and morals, one univocal, the other plurivocal. The guests on the program noted Congressman Henry Hyde's appeal to "the universal standard of truth," and the president's counsel, Sherry Mills speaking about ten versions of the truth. Further it was noted that while Republicans believe our leaders should be role models, Democrats want leaders who are our equals not father figures. Who said theologians and their ideas have no impact on everyday, practical life? It just takes about twenty-five years!

⁷ Surya Das, *Awakening the Buddha Within* (New York: Broadway/Bantam Doubleday, 1997), 16.

⁸ Hannah Tillich, *From Time to Time* (New York: Stein and Day, 1973), 24 and 223.

⁹ Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Self Reliance* (1847), cited in Eugene Narrett, "Proud Ephemerals: Signs of Self Made Men," *Culture Wars* (December, 1999), 4.

¹⁰ Hermann Bavinck, *Methodist Review* (1901).

¹¹ Helen Shucman, *A Course in Miracles* (New York: Foundation For Inner Peace, 1975), 47 and 262.

Will Feminism Win?

LeRoy Christoffels

Will the Feminists Win?

From the pulpit of New York City's First Presbyterian Church on May 22, 1922, Dr. Harry Emerson Fosdick preached a sermon entitled, "Shall the Fundamentalists Win?" This sermon became a well-known part of the modernist-fundamentalist controversy of those days. Within the Presbyterian Church a great controversy was brewing, and certain leaders had written documents defending certain fundamental elements of the Christian faith. These were the infallibility of the Scriptures, the virgin birth of Christ, His substitutionary atonement, His bodily resurrection, and the miracles of Christ. While these writers were persuaded that the Reformed faith was much broader than these fundamentals and did not really appreciate the label "fundamentalists," they nevertheless insisted that the historic Christian faith includes as essentials, these fundamental doctrines. Fosdick's sermon proclaimed toleration and magnanimity on all sides. Gracious but unenlightened souls who believed in the virgin birth and other miracles, and in a literal and visible return of Christ should be permitted to hold to their antiquated views of course, but in Fosdick's opinion, their views would soon pass away. The answer to his question, "Shall the Fundamentalists Win?" was clearly, "No," and obviously he hoped they would not. In fact those who held to these views were clearly intolerant and were a threat to the unity of the church. Surely Jesus Himself would have nothing to do with such bigotry, or with these theories of atonement, with miracles, or with the inerrancy and infallibility of Scripture!

How would Fosdick's question apply to feminism? Will the feminists win? The heirs of the old liberals of the 1920s are the modern feminists whose views may range from those

who advocate women's ordination to goddess theology. Like the earlier "modernists," today's feminists do not deny the right of individual preachers and members to hold to the historic position of the church regarding the ordination of women, and regarding the use of feminine



language for God in worship. They too plead for toleration of their viewpoint. But as soon as they obtain it, they refuse to tolerate those who hold to and defend the historic position of the church. Also like the Presbyterian fathers of the 1920s the feminists of today may be selective in accepting or rejecting specific doctrines and practices of feminism, but many defend the right to hold to a broad spectrum of views or may argue that the issues are not really that important. Within the Christian Reformed denomination, inclusive language for God has been largely rejected, and a synod has confirmed such a rejection. The ordination of women to all offices is another story.

Losses

Battles for truth continue in every age, but participants are not always dressed or equipped with the same armor. The church of Jesus Christ always has and always will face attacks on her precious store of the gospel — attempts to steal her pearl of great price and bury it. Often she is her own worst enemy, failing to offer gospel treasure to the world or

failing to assist others in finding it. Conservatives too have to admit to a lack of zeal for evangelism, or to a lack of vision for the power of a sovereign God to bring the nations to Himself. Sometimes conservatives are subject to defeatism and division within their ranks. CRC members with wise and godly minds have left the ranks of those who would carry the truth within the church. They have chosen to carry on their task in other denominations or independent communions. This is a great loss for the CRC, for no longer do we benefit from the specific insight and strength of these brothers at classical and synodical gatherings. Of course their insight and contribution on matters of doctrine and practice is still available for the church as a whole, and we thank God for that. We ought to accept any help and insight these brothers might offer us. (John Stott's comments on Ephesians 4:4-6 are relevant here: you can't really split the church any more than you can split the Holy Trinity.)

Still our ranks are depleted in the CRC, and we have a major gap in leadership. The contacts that were beginning to be made and that may have given organizational strength to the conservatives no longer exist as they once did — or could have. Yet our ultimate hope is not in organizational strength or in numbers.

Giving up or Continuing Battle?

Meanwhile the feminist-liberal agenda seems to be pressing on to full salvation and glory especially in mainline denominations, and to an extent in the CRC. Several churches have women pastors, and the seminary and synod offer women candidates for ministry to the church. Certain synodical delegates regularly attempt to disenfranchise delegates who object to women candidates out of principle, by

proposing that both male and female candidates be lumped into one vote. Objectors are advised that they may not vote against female candidates but may only abstain from voting. Now the 2000 Synod of the Christian Reformed church must gear up for its own Y2K issue: reconsidering the issue of female ordination. What's to consider? The liberal strategy has worked: the cow is out of the barn, and who will get her back in? (The CRC has met and continued status quo for 5 more years — Editors.) Should we give up and concede that women in office is a settled and dead issue? We are tired of fighting and constant debating. Are we going to quit the debate out of frustration and disappointment?

Great pressure exists to keep the peace. It's not nice for brothers to fight, the argument runs. The devil loves it when we fight each other and quit evangelizing, so let's just resign to reality and go on, trying to hold the line on homosexuality and the Reformed doctrine of worship. All this may sound right until you consider that advocates of a gay agenda are still promoting their new views on that issue. In addition many churches have fallen for the idea that Reformed doctrine has no noticeable impact on worship, and that it is all a matter of style or preference anyway. Conservatives would then be returning to the sidelines to watch the election returns year after year while "the present trend" continues. The night is getting late. Shall we just give up and go to bed?

Aiming for Conversion

Of course we need to speak carefully and accurately. Some of those who seem to have feminist-liberal leanings really are true believers in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord and fail to see the inconsistency of their position with the historic understanding of the authority of Scripture. Others simply think the debates will do no good and will end up hurting each other and our witness. Let's not be arrogant — as those who don't mind being called conservatives — denying the

work of grace in the lives of fellow believers. But let's not be naive either: if no one argues for the historic complementarian position in the debate, how will anyone be won with the truth? One problem is that often the debate is not centered on truth but on emotions or feelings or personal situations. One could argue that postmodernism appears in the strategies taken by the current brand of liberals who may deny that absolute truth in the teaching of Scripture on the issue of female ordination even exists. Older liberal interpretations of Scripture conceded that Paul was clearly against the ordination of women. These liberals openly admitted that they disagreed with Paul! Still we must ask: Do we care about winning the liberals for orthodox truth? Will the fruit of the Spirit be in evidence as we seek to persuade brothers of the truth of the historic position of the church?

Our Confidence

Shall the feminist liberals win? NO WAY! Truth will always prevail in the end. An entire denomination, once solid in commitment to orthodox truth, may fall (often in the name of ortho-praxy). I pray the CRC will not be dragged any farther down that road by those who keep harping on the same tired issues. And it doesn't have to be. But even if it is dragged farther from truth, God will preserve on the earth those who witness to the truth where they are. King Darius wondered whether God was able to shut the mouths of the lions! The two witnesses in Revelation 11 are left for dead, and the world celebrates, but in the end they are not defeated.

Consider the history: advocates of the new position on women simply don't take no for an answer. For 25 years they persistently raised the issue and refused to let synod kill it. They published and wrote articles and got *The Banner* to support their cause. They wrote overtures, not merely supporting one strand of their argument, but literally flooding the synod with their arguments through overtures, visits to committees, intellectually reasoned arguments, and

a good dose of sentimentalism. The feminist liberals took their case even farther. In defiance of the common agreement of the Church Order, they simply began doing what they desired. This strategy brought great psychological pressure on the church and on delegates to synod. Irrational but emotional arguments were employed: "I used to be opposed to women in office, but then I thought about my precious infant daughter, and wondered whether she would ever feel called to the ministry. And I changed my mind." After hounding the church for 25 years, the feminist liberals were tired of not getting their way. They began to insist: "But we've discussed this for twenty-five years, and it's time to let it happen." Never mind that this begs the question. Still another famous tactic was employed; liberals do not want a matter resolved until they win. The strategy was to keep the conversation going year after year until everyone was worn out. Finally what synod clearly aimed to settle in 1994 through a very clear understanding of Scripture was not accepted. Normally opposition to a synodical decision dies down, and the unity of the church is viewed as more important than lobbying for the new agenda. Not in this case. *The Banner* editor wailed and howled over the "unfair decision" of 1994. Others joined in. And in 1995 synod caved in to the new non-theological left.

The question is: Did synod cave in just in time for the feminist liberal agenda? 1995 may have been a window of opportunity for this agenda. Now that we have crawled through that window, it will be difficult to get everybody back in. But there are reports that younger members of the church, including pastors and seminary students are more conservative. When these begin to occupy positions of responsibility in the church, will the victory of the feminist-liberals be secure? Or — is there assurance that the Spirit of the Lord will not sweep the CRC — and other evangelicals — with the wind of truth?

Brilliant strategy and pressure has worked for the feminist liberal promoters. But this is nothing compared to prayer — and the power of the Spirit. When He opens hearts to the truth, who will stand against Him? Can even the bureaucracy of the mainline liberal churches keep Him out?

The essential unity of the church has been damaged by the promotion of the feminist liberal agenda. It has been weakened by an attitude of compromise that is democratic but not ecclesiastical. Indeed love is required, but so is truth. Compromise is not the most loving response to an issue.

The Importance of the Issue

But is this question of women's ordination important? Shouldn't we major in more important matters like baptism? If this is not a salvation issue, should we be fighting it? In no way should infant baptism be sacrificed. By itself the issue is not as important as the deity of Christ. But the claim that this is not a salvation issue is irrelevant. Most Reformed believers would not deny that an Arminian might be saved by grace despite his poor theology. Yet biblical Christians must defend and do defend the teachings of grace and the sovereignty of God outlined so beautifully and clearly in our confessions. The women in office question is a matter of obedience. Old liberals conceded that Paul and the New Testament were against women's ordination, but then they politely chose to disagree with Paul. Feminist liberals have tried in our day to make Paul say the opposite of what he actually says, or to make Paul unclear in order to justify the practice. But have they not brought to Scripture pre-judgment instead of deducing from the Word of God a conclusion fairly made — and consistent with the historic teaching of the holy catholic church?

The Christian Reformed Church has been influenced by liberal feminism. Not all are radically feminist (for

example, some who believe in women's ordination do not believe in feminizing language for God), but the influence of this movement has affected us. Many who are influenced by feminism sincerely believe they are somehow able to reconcile their new position with Scripture. But here we have to back up to ask whether the facts bear it out. Those of us who judge that the facts do not support women in office must be prepared to defend the truth and to explain it clearly without unduly antagonizing. The women in office issue is only part of a larger picture: rejection of western culture and ways, accommodation to feminism, a new way of reading Scripture, a powerful pressure to deny the existence of absolute truth and of propositional revelation.

Assurance

Will the feminist liberal approach win? I am firmly persuaded it will not because it ignores a most significant reality: Scripture clearly teaches that women may *not* be ordained. One cannot ignore Paul's writings to Timothy and to the Corinthians. Scripture directly confronts the gods of this age. Scripture is the voice of the Holy Spirit, and He will have the last word!

The Spirit may have appeared to by-pass the old liberals: not much is left even of the shell of their theology. The liberal feminists are ruminating in the dry and barren husks of that theology which was popular in the 1920s. If they do finally lead the CRC farther and farther from where the people are in their thinking and faith, the glory will indeed have departed, and the Lord may work elsewhere. But this is our hope and confidence: He will keep working! However shallow confessional believers may see the "conservatives" in liberal denominations, the Lord may still renew them. And He may renew the weakened CRC. I pray He will. But returning to our question: Will the liberal feminists win? No. And they ought to be running scared. For God is the Ruler yet. The

Lord of Sabbath has a way of overturning tyranny and untruth. And He surely will!

Action

This is no call for a quietism that lets conservatives sit back and let God take care of it. We must use the means available. We need to write overtures, prepare for debate carefully, patiently answer questions, do our best — and engage in earnest prayer that God will:

- 1) lead the church to use the gifts of women appropriately and within the guidelines of Scripture, recognizing the implications of male headship in the church;
- 2) lead the church to reject anything that contradicts biblical teaching on women in office, and to affirm that God Himself has so organized His church that women may not take upon themselves the offices of elder and minister, nor may an ecclesiastical organization confer upon women such obligations. This is prayer that the Spirit may so convict the church that it will decide on the basis of true exegesis of Scripture and not on the basis of emotion or willful disobedience;
- 3) lead the church to a renewed commitment and zeal for her confessions and thus to the marrow and meat of Holy Scripture.

Will the feminist liberals win? Though it may appear so for a time, there is no doubt that the Word of the living God will prevail. I am praying — along with many others — that we will see it personally in our own lifetime. But even if we do not see it with our own eyes, the liberal feminists will finally lose the battle for the unrealistic procedure they have already initiated. Again, the answer to the question at the head of this article is a resounding NO!

Rev. Christoffels is the pastor of the Worthington Christian Reformed Church in Worthington, Minnesota.

What's to Happen Next?



Gary Cox

I was driving back to Lexington from Georgia. The traffic was horrible as all the spring break escapees were returning to the prisons of routine. As I watched thousands pass by, I silently wondered, "How many of these people really understand what is happening to this nation and Western civilization?" The world, as we have known it, is quickly crumbling. The walls are coming down. Some will cheer the collapse; indeed, they have worked hard for it; others of us will weep.

Need some proof? Recently the U.S. Supreme Court actually debated the outlawing of partial birth abortion in Nebraska. This is the procedure whereby a baby is all but delivered with only half of its head remaining in the womb. The doctor penetrates the back of the child's skull with a sharp instrument, thus ending his or her life in the most gruesome of methods that by any rational definition is nothing short of barbaric.

Yet the highest court of our land "debated" whether or not to ban such a procedure. That's like debating whether people over 60 should be allowed to live — it's so self-evident it's not debatable. Yet, "...Justice John Paul Stevens said the partial-birth procedure was the most appropriate for the 10 to 20 women a year who needed it. (How would he know?) Justice David Souter said it appeared to be "cavalier" for such a law to override the judgment of doctors in the matter. Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg said, "The law does not take the health of the woman into account and does not further the life of the fetus ("fetus" is a euphemism for "baby") since other abortion methods would be used anyway."

So another wall of our civilization crumbles before our eyes and we, the people, seem content to drive on to our next destination far more

concerned about the price of gas than the price we will pay if infanticide is allowed to continue.

Great, long stretches of the wall of Western civilization came crashing down as the Supreme Court of Vermont recently deconstructed the most basic of human institutions. "...The law, when signed, will be the first of its kind in the United States. It would allow same-sex couples to go to their town clerk to obtain a license that would be certified by a judge, justice of the peace, or clergy member. Partners would gain all the benefits the state confers through marriage." "What God has established for the good order and well-being of society (not to mention its continuance), we defy to our own peril.

What next? Well, our Constitution says absolutely nothing about a "wall of separation between church and state." The words are found in a private letter that Thomas Jefferson wrote to a friend, and yet Ohio's motto, "With God, all things are possible," is said to violate the U.S. Constitution because it is a government endorsement of religion, according to a federal court ruling on April 25.

The Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals in Cincinnati sided with the American Civil Liberties Union, which argued that the words endorse Christianity, news reports said. Ohio took the motto from Matthew 19:2 where Jesus said, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible." The state argued that the motto does not compel people to believe anything. Take a poll and find out how many have converted to Christianity because of this motto.

The culture war rages on. Sadly, too much of what parades as "Christian" in terms of church and people looks suspiciously unchristian from a face-value reading of Scripture.

So, we drive on in blissful stupor. We see no evil. We hear no evil. We speak no evil. We don't even vote much anymore. And one day we just may wake up...and wonder what happened to our nation.

Rev. Gary Cox is minister of Meadowview Reformed Presbyterian Church (PCA) in Lexington, NC.

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Speaker

Rev. Paul Murphy

Date

September 28

Time

6:00 pm - Punchbowl

6:30 pm - Dinner

7:20 pm - Business Meeting

8:00 pm - Inspirational Meeting

Place

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5401 Byron Center Avenue

Price

\$8.00 per person

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Old Fishing Boats

When I was a teenager, I reconditioned a number of old fishing boats. They were wooden boats, made by hand before World War II. They had been discarded by previous owners who considered them too old and leaky to fix up. In some cases, the former owners were correct, and my work was in vain. The boats were simply too old, and the wood was too worn and rotten to recondition.

My friends did not understand my affection for old fishing boats. Aluminum boats had become popular, followed by fiberglass, and wooden hulls no longer were wanted. But to me, there was something about the graceful lines of the old boats, the feel of the wood, and the way they handled in the water that the newer crafts could not match. Besides, there were memories associated with the old boats that new models did not have.

I remember one boat in particular because it had such beautiful lines. Not a boat today has lines like that. It must have been a beauty when it was new. I wanted very much to see it glide across the water again. I invested a great deal of time, energy, and plenty of pocket money trying to save it. But the boat was beyond repair. The wood was too far-gone. With a heavy heart I towed the old boat to a deep spot in the lake, and with a private farewell ceremony I let it sink to the bottom.



Old Boats and Old Church Buildings

Old church buildings are often like old fishing boats. They have splendid architecture, beautiful stained glass windows, and most of all, precious memories of all the saints who found the Lord and worshiped there. But as with old fishing boats, it takes an enormous amount of money and effort to maintain aging church buildings. There comes a point when you may have to give them up.

In cities like New York, Philadelphia, Chicago, New Orleans, and Detroit, dozens of in-town churches have been closed over the past thirty years. Congregations moved to the suburbs, new highways divided neighborhoods and isolated church buildings, and buildings themselves became obsolete, no longer serving the needs of church members.

Some of the grandest old buildings in American cities belong to the Roman Catholic Church. But Catholics, like Protestants, have left the city for the suburbs. Their departure now threatens the future of magnificent, 19th century sanctuaries. On a recent visit to Chicago I visited a parish church with its adjoining Catholic school buildings and residences for priests and nuns. All of them were shut down, abandoned, and a prey to vandals.

"It's sad," commented an elderly nun who had spent most of her life teaching at the Catholic school, "but buildings are merely material things that were a blessing to us for a long time. But they are inanimate. We can't

Roger S. Greenway

continue maintaining buildings that no longer are of use to us. Things have changed."

Like my old boat, the building had to go down.

New Life by Changing Hands

Years ago, the Reformed Church in America had more than a dozen congregations in the city of Philadelphia. On Broad Street, near where my wife and I lived for some years, a gem of a building stands whose cornerstone still identifies it as having been erected early in the 20th century by an RCA congregation. But around 1984, the last RCA congregation within the Philadelphia city limits closed down. The building was sold to a Hispanic congregation that had outgrown its facilities.

I preached for the old Reformed congregation a few weeks before it disbanded, and only a few dozen people made up the Sunday morning audience. But on the first Sunday that the incoming Hispanic congregation occupied the building, the place was filled! New life came to the old building by letting it change hands to a different group that represented the neighborhood. By making the transfer while the building was still useful, it became a blessing to another generation.

Taking the Pain Out of Change

Experience tells us that any alteration to a cherished old building can be divisive to a congregation, and a proposal to transfer it to an altogether new owner inevitably faces stiff opposition. We love our old buildings! We cling to the hallowed

memories they bring to mind. The wise words of the old nun ("buildings are merely material things that were a blessing to us, but they are inanimate") are hard to swallow when it is our building that is under consideration.

Some years ago, when I was studying in Fort Worth, Texas, I was approached by a group representing a denomination that I had never heard of before, the Advent Christian Church. They were without a pastor and wanted to know if I would be willing (for \$50 a week) to preach for them twice on Sunday and lead the midweek prayer and worship service on Wednesday evening.

The members showed me their church bulletin that listed Sunday School classes at all grade levels, an adult class and several other organizations. The weekly bulletin was printed on fine, attractive paper and gave every appearance of an active church. Then I inquired about the membership. To my amazement they admitted that there were only six remaining members and all were over 60 years of age. There had not been a child in church for years!

Yet, the list of classes and midweek activities appeared in the church bulletin just as in the "glory days" of the past. Those six dear people kept going by denying reality.

I accepted their offer on two conditions: first, that they allow me to put up a sign reading, "The Christian Reformed Church of Dallas/Fort Worth meets here"; and second, that I be allowed to preach Reformed doctrine and use the *Heidelberg Catechism*. They had never heard of the CRC or the *Heidelberg Catechism*, but they accepted my conditions anyway.

Besides getting a CRC started, my main accomplishment was to convince that handful of precious old people that the time had come to sell their well-kept building and let a Hispanic congregation take it over. They had to see that they would not be letting

the Lord down by making the transfer, but instead they were doing something that pleased the Lord. They were allowing the building that had been a blessing to them to become a blessing to a new and younger group of believers that needed such a facility. When they made the decision they did it with joy and gratitude.

Learning to Assess Conditions

As a boy, I made mistakes when I chose to put time and effort into old fishing boats that actually were beyond repair. I became emotionally attached to the graceful old boats, and it impaired my judgment. I learned the hard way that while some boats could be restored to usefulness, others could not. I had to learn how to assess a boat's condition and its potential for further usefulness. If a boat has become old and no longer fits the owner's needs, or he simply wants a new and bigger one, it is reasonable that the old boat be given or sold to another fisher who is looking for such a boat. The new owner may make some repairs, customize the boat a bit, and then use it for many years to catch fish.

This applies to church buildings, especially in large cities where needs have changed and church members have moved away. Most church buildings eventually outlive their usefulness to the people who own them. However, buildings can

continue to be useful to God's people if they are transferred on time to other branches of God's family, and transferred in a manner that reflects a proper sense of stewardship and mission.

For the gospel to be spread in any community, there have to be churches whose worship and ministry match the people and needs of the community. Churches must speak the language of the people, reflect their culture, sing as they sing, and talk as they talk. Their needs must be understood and addressed by Christian people like themselves. When an aging but still useful building can be transferred to another group of Christians that can minister more effectively in the community, God be praised! That, too, is an act of evangelism.

This article is reprinted from *Missionary Monthly*, June-July/2000.

Dr. Roger S. Greenway, Missionary Monthly Associate Editor, has been professor of World Missiology at Calvin Theological Seminary, Grand Rapids, MI, since 1989. Earlier, he and his wife, Edna, served as Christian Reformed missionaries to Sri Lanka and Mexico. Dr. Greenway has served as pastor and mission administrator and has written numerous mission books and articles.

First Christian Reformed Church Thunder Bay, Ontario

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Join us for a dinner and a program at 6:30 p.m.

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Ephesians 2:20, 21, 22

The Genome Map: A Potentially Frightening New World



Cal Thomas

Who does not rejoice at the prospect of diseases cured and defective genes repaired now that the genetic code has been cracked? Still — as we've seen from the beginning of time, when Cain killed Abel, to modern times, when humans still murder other humans and wars rage — objects, science and technology can be used for good or evil purposes. It depends on the intent of the user.

In an age when technology feels few restraints, science has been given a new tool with which to perform miracles. But science can debase human creatures when it treats us as evolutionary accidents with no intrinsic moral significance, and the state assigns itself the role of God.

Before moving forward with no firm ethical guidelines, we should revisit Aldous Huxley's classic 1932 novel *Brave New World*. In it Huxley visualizes a planet without moral controls, presided over by a single world government. Designer humans are created in laboratories to fit the needs of a society whose highest goals are utilitarianism and happiness, which is the ultimate objective of humanity. "World Controllers," as Huxley calls the authority, suppress individual initiative in favor of uniformity.

Family is gone, and so is any sense of spirituality. Only carnal pleasure is pursued, and any rituals must be orgiastic in nature. The new "trinity" in Huxley's mind would be Henry Ford (the idol), soma (a wonder drug), and sex. Ford has been replaced by the Dow Jones Industrial Average as our contemporary idol, but drugs and uncontrolled sex are still with us.

In the book, students who tour the Central London Hatchery and Conditioning Center observe various machines and techniques that promote

the production and conditioning of embryos. "Predestinators" decide the future function of each embryo within society, and each is assigned a job. The society has a five-tiered caste system that ranks Alphas and Betas on top (now we know where Al Gore advisor Naomi Wolf got this idea).

In his follow-up work, *Brave New World Revisited*, Huxley said the only way to create a permanently stable society is for a totalitarian regime to exercise absolute power. The social motto is: "Community, Identity, Stability." Community is established by dividing the population into segments in which the Alphas function as intellectual superiors, and another caste called "Epsilons" performs menial labor. Identity is established in the Conditioning Center where embryos are separated into five groups. Stability is maintained through the limitation placed on the intelligence of each group.

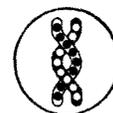
The state chooses what each child shall learn (which it largely does now, with the exception of private and home schooling). The parental relationship with children is dirty and improper. Feelings are obsolete. Children are conditioned to think and act only as members of their class rather than as individuals.

This 68-year-old book is Huxley's warning against the misuse of science. He sees science as a potentially dehumanizing force, robbing the human race of that which makes us distinctive — our creativity, our ability to love, reason and relate to God. (Though Huxley claimed not to believe in God, it's nice that he saw the need for someone to.) All of these human distinctions are replaced in Huxley's novel by science with the help of an all-pervasive state.

Can't happen here? It did in Germany, Russia, China, and other places where

science joined politicians in a quest for the master race and the perfect state, and got the worst of all possible worlds. Aldous Huxley attempted to warn his generation about the consequences of soul-less technology. In our time, who in political and scientific circles is going to sound the warning that we should know the rules of the road and our destination before putting our trust in the human genome map — the scientists who can read it and the politicians who seek to manipulate it for their own purposes?

Los Angeles Times Syndicate



Untangling a Ball

by Les Sillars

Human genetic material is organized into 3 pairs of chromosomes, each composed of protein molecules and one long strand of DNA. The chromosomes are in distinct pairs only when the cell is dividing; the rest of the time they form a tangled ball called the genome.

A gene is a section of a DNA strand that "encodes for" or makes the proteins that determine how the cell develops and functions. "Introns," sections of DNA that either apparently do not have a function or whose function is unknown, make up 97 percent of the genome. DNA molecules are made up of nitrogen — containing nucleotides called "bases."

DNA has four types of bases — adenine (A), thymine (T), cytosine (C), and guanine (G) — arranged in pairs in the twisted-ladder shape known as a "double-helix." G is always paired with C and T with A. The Human Genome Project is discovering the order of all three billion of these base pairs in the human genome. A single DNA molecule (one chromosome) is 25 to 125 million base pairs long.

The sequencing procedure is complicated, but here's a rough sketch: Technicians insert a small section of DNA (it can come from one of about 10-20 anonymous individuals — Baylor works with the DNA of a male) into bacteria which then multiply, producing a supply of the exact same DNA.

Using variations in temperature and chemical processes, this DNA is extracted from the bacteria and then broken down into smaller and smaller pieces. A molecule of florescent dye is attached to each base, with a different color for each type. The fragments are then sent down an array of tiny glass tubes, where a laser beam illuminates the colors on each of thousands of fragments.

Computers then analyze the colors and fragment lengths, looking for overlapping sequences, to partially determine the sequence of the original tiny section of DNA about 500-700 base pairs long. Human "assemblers" finish the job. With five assemblers, the Baylor operations sequence about two million base-pairs per month. The data from all the Project's sequencing centers go onto an Internet-accessible database that is updated daily.

This article is reprinted from *World*, April 29, 2000.

What We Believe

The Doctrine of Justification (V)

Can a Lonely Faith Justify? The Teaching of James



Cornelis P. Venema

"What use is it, my brethren, if a man says he has faith, but he has no works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Go in peace, be warmed and be filled,' and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that? Even so, faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself. But someone may well say, 'You have faith and I have works.' Show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works. You believe that God is one. You do well. The demons also believe and shudder. But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless. Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar? You see that faith was working with his works and as a result of the works, faith was perfected. And the scripture was fulfilled which says, 'And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness, and he was called the friend of God.' You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone. And in the same way was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way? For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead."

James 2:14-26

Until now in this series of articles on justification, I have only set forth the doctrine of justification. In doing so, we have considered what is meant by the claim that *justification* is by *grace alone* on account of *Christ alone* through *faith alone*. I have attempted to present a Scriptural summary of what this great doctrine teaches us about God's grace. This teaching is succinctly stated by the Apostle Paul in Romans 3:28: "Therefore, we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the law."

On the basis of this and other passages, we noted that justification has to do with God's declaration as Judge of our innocence. Upon the basis of the work of Christ on our behalf, God declares us to be acceptable to Him. Not only are our sins forgiven, but God also grants and *imputes* to us the perfect righteousness of Christ so that it becomes ours. This bestowal or *imputation* of Christ's righteousness to us is a free gift that we receive by the hand of faith alone. Faith is the exclusive instrument by which to receive what God grants to us by grace. Such faith repudiates all thought of merit, and finds its life and sustenance in Christ alone. Only in this way are we justified, and does God's grace receive all praise and honor in our salvation.

A Common Objection

There is, however, a common, oft-repeated complaint against this teaching. The apostle Paul anticipates it in Romans 6 when he says, "Shall we sin then that grace abound?" This complaint or objection is that, if we are saved by grace alone, quite apart from any works done in obedience to the law of God, and if all we need do is receive that with the empty hand of faith, will that not make us "careless and profane" (*Heidelberg Catechism*, Lord's Day 24)? If God justifies us by grace alone apart from works, will that not lead to what we sometimes call "antinomianism"? Will we not be tempted to conclude that we may live any way we please, since our salvation is a free gift? That, regardless of the kind of life we live, God will nonetheless regard us as acceptable to Him? These questions cannot be ignored or avoided. The sheer graciousness of God's grace toward us in Christ compels us to confront them.

We are also compelled to confront this objection because it is central to the continuing polemic of the Roman Catholic Church against the doctrine of free justification. It has been a standard part of Roman Catholic teaching from the time of the Reformation that the doctrine of free justification dangerously undermines the necessity and importance of good works in the Christian life. The doctrine of free justification, so it is argued, represents a kind of "legal fiction": God regards us "as if" we were righteous, when in fact we remain sinners as we were before.¹ According to this complaint, sinners, when they are saved, are not really changed by God's grace, and their lives undergo no real amendment.

Now I noted in an earlier article, in reply to the charge that free justification is a kind of "legal fiction," that it is anything but fictional. When God justifies us upon the basis of the righteousness of Christ that He grants and *imputes* to us, He does something most real. There is nothing fictional about God's act of granting to us in Christ what we need to stand before Him. If I may be permitted a comparison, that would be like a person who says, "So-and-so paid bond for me and on that basis obtained my release from jail; but, because I didn't personally meet that bond obligation, it's not real that I've been released." We would say that such a person is talking nonsense. Of course it's a reality, not fiction!

But what ultimately lies behind this objection to free justification—that it is a legal fiction — is the contention that the doctrine of free justification means that, when God declares men to be acceptable to Himself, He also leaves them in their sins. God's work of grace ends, terminates, upon

justification, and doesn't bring with it the grace of sanctification as well.

In this connection, I am reminded of a poem by W. H. Auden, entitled *Luther*. Perhaps you are familiar with it. In this poem, Auden expresses vividly this common objection to the doctrine of justification, that it encourages complacency and an indifference to good works in the Christian life:

Conscience cocked to listen for
the thunder.
The views of judgment fluttered
in his head.
All works, great men, societies
are altogether bad.
The just shall live by faith, he
cried in dread.
And men and women of the
world were glad,
Who'd never cared or trembled
in their lives.

The point Auden is making is not hard to discover. Luther and the Reformation, with their doctrine of justification by grace alone through Christ alone, encouraged a kind of lifeless and profane indulgence of the grace of God. This is a doctrine that gladdens the heart of sinners, not in the sense of a proper joy in God's work of salvation, but in the sense of encouraging them to continue in their cherished sins that grace might abound.

The Teaching of James 2

Invariably, this objection to the teaching of free justification appeals to the teaching of James 2. When the Roman Catholic Council of Trent condemned the doctrine of the Reformation, no passage of Scripture was more frequently cited than this one. According to the authors of the Council, James 2 offers a convincing proof of the error of the Reformation's teaching regarding justification. Contrary to the insistence that justification is by grace alone through faith alone, apart from works, the Apostle James clearly teaches that we are also

justified by our works. The believer's justification is based upon God's grace, to be sure. But this grace produces good works done in obedience to the law of God which are also a part of the ground for our justification.

For this reason, Luther — who, as you may know, was a bit impetuous and given to impromptu remarks that demonstrated sometimes perhaps more zeal than wisdom — on one occasion, in his preface to his 1522 edition of the New Testament, remarked that the epistle of James is a "right strawy" epistle. Though Luther had better things to say about James on other occasions, in this instance he expressed his readiness to consign it to the flames, rather than allow it to stand against the doctrine of justification by faith alone.

Because of the importance of the issue and this common appeal to the teaching of James 2, it is necessary that, before we conclude our consideration of the doctrine of justification, we consider this passage. What does it teach us about the role of good works in the life of the believer? And does it contradict what we have claimed regarding our justification by grace alone through faith alone?

Luther's critical comment regarding James 2 is well known. What is not as well known is that Luther is reported to have remarked on one occasion in his table conversation: "Faith alone justifies.' That stands in flat contradiction to 'faith alone does not justify.' If anyone can harmonize these sayings [that is, the sayings of Paul in, for example, Romans 3:28, and the apostle James in James 2:21, 24], I'll put my doctor's cap upon him, and I'll grant him the privilege to call me a fool."

That will be our challenge in what follows: to see whether we can earn the right to wear Luther's doctor's cap and say of Luther, on this score at least, "He was not wise" (to put it in terms more polite than his!).

What I propose to do then is to address the question: Does the doctrine of justification by grace alone through faith alone contradict the necessity or diminish the importance of good works in the life of the true Christian? This question, expressed more precisely in terms of the teaching of James 2, is: Does James 2, as Catholicism historically alleges, contradict the doctrine of justification by grace alone through faith alone?

As I hope to show, the argument of James amounts to the claim that "a lonely faith does not justify." A lonely faith — that is, a faith that is unaccompanied by good works and therefore an empty and lifeless thing — does not save. However, James does not teach that good works are the ground or basis for our acceptance with God.

As we study these verses, there are two headings that I would like to set before you. First, I am going to look at these verses under the heading, "What is the question?" And then second, I propose to look at these verses under the heading, "What is the answer or the resolution?"

(To be continued in the October/2000 issue of *The Outlook*)

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Footnotes

¹ This is often expressed as well in the complaint that the formula, *simul iustus et peccator* (the justified is "at once righteous and yet a sinner"), encourages a dangerous indifference to the necessity of good works in the Christian life. However, this formula was never intended to deny the necessity or reality of good works in the life of the believer. It was aimed at the idea that our good works could ever be, in the whole or in part, the ground of our justification.

In Spirit & Truth

James Montgomery Boice 1938-2000

W. Robert Godfrey



On June 23, 2000 a memorial service was held at Tenth Presbyterian Church (PCA) in Philadelphia for its pastor, James Montgomery Boice, who had died eight days earlier as the result of an aggressive form of liver cancer. He was 61 years old.

The service was a two-hour testimony to the grace of God and His use of His servant. The music was beautiful, including two hymns and an anthem for which Dr. Boice had written the words and the church's organist, Paul S. Jones, had composed the music. Three men spoke of their personal experiences with Dr. Boice, including Dr. C. Everett Koop, former Surgeon General of the United States, who had served thirty-two years earlier on the pastoral search committee that had recommended the calling of Dr. Boice to Tenth. Dr. R.C. Sproul also spoke of his years of working with Dr. Boice on various efforts to promote the Reformed faith and uphold the inerrancy of Scripture.

The Rev. Eric Alexander, a retired pastor of the Church of Scotland, preached movingly from the text, "For me to live is Christ and to die is gain." He spoke of how Dr. Boice had lived for Christ and what a disciplined life of service it had been. He also stressed that while death remains the enemy, because of the work of Christ, dying is gain in Christ for those who inherit eternal life.

After the service Linda Boice and their three daughters greeted the well over 1000 people that attended the memorial.

It was my privilege to attend the service and to count Jim Boice among my friends. I had spoken with him several times at various conferences, including the Philadelphia Conferences on Reformation Theology that he began over twenty years ago. I also served with him on the council of the Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals. As I sat at the service it struck me anew how much he had contributed to the cause of Christ in our generation and how we will miss his wise leadership.

In the 1970s he had chaired the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy which did so much to defend the authority of Scripture on both a popular and scholarly level. He had a national radio program, *The Bible Study Hour*, and in the course of his ministry wrote over sixty books, including a four-volume commentary on the Book of Romans. He was one of the founders of the Alliance of Confession Evangelicals, dedicated to promoting and defending Reformation theology.

In addition to these remarkable achievements, he pastored a church that grew in the years he served there from 350 to over 1200. He also led the church into a variety of programs that helped to keep it vital as a downtown church in a big city: fellowship and deaconal ministries, outreach to international students, care for women with crisis pregnancies, for the homeless, and for those infected with HIV.

To accomplish all this, Dr. Boice was remarkably disciplined and hard-working. Yet he remained warm, unpretentious, and caring for those with whom he came in contact.

As I sat at the memorial service, I could not help but think that again the Lord had taken from His church someone who could yet have contributed so much. I thought of J. Gresham Machen earlier in this century and of John Calvin in the sixteenth century, both of whom had died in their mid-fifties. The loss of great and apparently irreplaceable leaders reminds us that we must rest in God alone and in His wisdom. His providence is always good and wise even when we can not fully understand it. We know that Christ will build His church and that no force (or loss) will defeat that purpose.

Also I thought of those remarkable words of Isaiah 57:1-2:

The righteous perish, and no one ponders it in his heart; devout men are taken away, and no one understands that the righteous are taken away to be spared from

evil. Those who walk uprightly enter into peace; they find rest as they lie in death.

We should pause to ponder the death of the righteous and what it means for them and for us. Isaiah in chapter 57 writes of the sins of his day — immorality and idolatry — as that from which the righteous are delivered. And concludes with a wonderful promise for the righteous: "But the man who makes me his refuge will inherit the land and possess my holy mountain." A new world is promised those who are righteous in Christ. That is our confidence for Jim Boice. He is spared the troubles of this world and is assured of the blessed reward of those who are saved by grace through faith in Christ.

He died at peace with great confidence in his Savior. His last appearance on the pulpit at Tenth was to announce that he was very ill and did not have the strength to preach. He said that he had been asked if people might pray that he would be miraculously healed. He responded that that was legitimate and that God sometimes did surprising things. But Dr. Boice said that his God could have prevented the disease if long life had been His will for him and he rested content in his Lord's providence.

Mr. Alexander concluded his sermon at the memorial service by quoting from Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, the scene where Mr. Valiant for the Truth dies. He commented that Dr. Boice had been very valiant for the truth in our generation — the truth of Scripture and the truth of the Reformed faith. We will miss his strong, clear, biblical voice for the faith. But we are comforted to know that he is at peace, resting from a life of dedicated labor. And we are assured that Christ will continue to build His church.

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The Shepherd's Staff A Biblical Plan for Ministry



John Sittema

Long Range Planning

If you've ever been a member of a Board of Directors for a Christian charitable organization, you know the term "Long Range Planning Committee." It's the one committee hardly anyone volunteers to be on. Long range planning is difficult work, requires visionary minds and a big picture perspective that few today seem to have. We're typically better at dealing with immediate issues and problems, not anticipating issues expected to arise in the next 5 or 10 years.

Many Reformed and Presbyterian churches shy away from long range planning. When I speak with church leaders, I hear statements like these: "Jesus never did a ministry plan. Why should we?" or "I don't read about any apostolic planning sessions in the book of Acts. We should just follow the Bible. Its got enough in it." Or the real kicker, "Calvin never had a long range plan for Geneva. He just preached!"

Aside from the humor, such comments reflect a shallow understanding of Scripture, and an even shallower understanding of the mission of the church. In this article, I want to build a case for long range planning for the local church, and invite elders and deacons to think seriously about instituting such planning meetings for their congregation.

Is It Biblical?

If you listen to the nay-sayers, you'd think that long range planning is a breach of faith, fails to trust the Lord, and reflects a worldly attitude toward the work of the church. But that simply isn't true.

Consider just a couple of passages from the Gospels and Acts (I could cite many). John 14-16 present to us Jesus' "farewell discourse," in which He prophesies His own death and subsequent "going away" by way of the ascension. He then spends a great amount of time detailing, with divine foresight, the obstacles the disciples will face in their ministry (hatred, persecution), promises the Holy Spirit to be the "counselor," and challenges the disciples to a ministry that is very carefully planned: preach, endure, withstand opposition, and through it all, bear fruit.

Or consider the book of Acts. Chapter 6 describes a circumstance in which a crisis has occurred, a crisis caused by enormous growth and the strain of that growth on the Jerusalem church. With God-given wisdom, the apostles appoint deacons to manage the resources of the church, assigning themselves to prayer and the ministry of the Word (v. 4). You might counter by saying, "That's not a long range plan, that's an adjustment." But I beg to differ. How many of our churches would be willing to significantly rearrange the responsibilities of deacons or other staff members so that pastoral elders were able to do nothing but focus on prayer and the ministering of the Word? To make that kind of shift requires a serious long range plan based on God's assignment of duties.

Consider Acts 15, the so-called "Jerusalem Synod." In it we hear Paul and Barnabus retelling the marvelous story of the Gentiles' conversion. And we witness the early church discussing priorities. Not priorities of time management, mind you, but priorities of doctrines! "What is it that we will require of converts? What's the entry level demands, as opposed to the goals of

long term disciples who are mature in the Lord?" That requires a plan of action, an initial declaration over against a long term goal. And when the apostles and other disciples had prayed and discussed, they concluded: "It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us not to burden you with anything beyond the following requirements: You are to abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals and from sexual immorality. You will do well to avoid these things."

Finally, take Acts 20. In the passage that I've quoted extensively and often in this column, we read Paul, on his way to Rome, bidding farewell to the Ephesian elders. In that farewell, he sets forth the long range plan for their work, including the establishment of their priorities. *First*, watch over yourselves because you're not immune to the devil's assault. *Second*, watch over the flock, precious in God's eyes, because the devil will assault the flock both from without and from within, especially using a distortion of the truth as their weapon. To do the above, stay in the Word, which will build you up and give you an inheritance. *Finally*, send me (Paul) on my way; you have work to do and so do I. You're on your own, without me, but always with the help of the Spirit!

Not Quite the Same?

Granted, such Biblical "mission plans" are not quite as detailed as are, say, the mission statements, goals, and vision plans drafted by many of today's churches. Indeed, some church's mission plans resemble a business plan so thoroughly that they seem to depend exclusively on planning and performance and never on the Holy Spirit and prayer!

But that's not what I'm calling for. I'm asking you all to look carefully at your ministries and adapt your energies and efforts in the Lord's service to the target and the opportunities God has provided you. Every Biblical ministry plan has similar components. *First*, an honest assessment of your immediate situation. For example, the spiritual forces affecting your people might include unbridled materialism, or children who are not making commitments to Christ when they mature, or a serious problem with sexual ethics among the singles. Also, assess your community. Is it old? Young? Drop-out evangelicals who went to Sunday School as kids, but haven't been back since? Strong Jewish or Muslim community? Internationals? Lots of cultural diversity? A powerful anti-Christian gay movement, or despair among youth reminiscent of Columbine HS in Colorado? How you plan to do evangelism is profoundly affected by whom you are trying to reach!

Second, take the pulse of your congregation. Do your people love the Lord? How do you know? Read their Bibles with delight (the devil knows doctrine, but doesn't delight in it!)? Pray both in public and in secret (not for show!)? Evangelize (not just talk, but actually testify!)? Demonstrate radical and personal transformation of life in service to Christ (true conversion!)? Faithful in glad and earnest worship (understanding that unbelievers have habits too)? Generous in giving (knowing that some try to buy their way into salvation)?

How about physical resources? Is your building sufficient? Take a tour, as if you had never been in a church before (literally walk through with that in mind). Ask yourself whether you are user friendly. Whether you have sufficient Bibles, song books, parking spaces. Whether a newcomer could figure out easily where the nursery or rest rooms are. How about the worship service itself? Does your bulletin serve to help, or does it contain so much "insider

information" that no one but a long term member would be able to figure it out without a translator?

Then *third*, match your resources with your mandate. Perhaps you'll have to call another pastor, or hire someone to assist your ministry who has gifts your congregation doesn't have. Perhaps you'll have to reorganize your committee structure to better utilize the gifts you have, unleashing your people for ministry without micromanaging them to death. Maybe you'll have to provide a lot more encouragement because many of your people are burned out from years of service with no evident fruit. Maybe you'll have to "fire" some people who are mismatched with their gifts and their job. (A long time SS teacher who can't teach is probably turning off a generation of kids, even if he/she is well meant!)

Here are a couple examples of such planning.

For example: Is your church located in an inner city, surrounded by a "pentecost" of languages, cultures, and races? Great! What are you doing to make sure your congregation reflects that diversity and reaches all kinds of people? If you're trying to cling to a certain ethnic and economic identity, you aren't loving your immediate neighbors with the gospel of Christ. More to the point, even if you recognize your calling and opportunity, if you've been ethnically and culturally monolithic for a long time, you'll need a radical and careful plan to allocate resources in such a way as to begin the transformation. (Much like Acts 6!) You may have to hire someone from a radically different racial or cultural background to reach people that you would not ordinarily reach.

Are you a commuter congregation (like the one I serve), where members drive up to 55 miles one way to church? Your plan of ministry must take that distance into account, perhaps in several ways. Maybe you'll have to "deliver" Bible Studies to the congregation, instead of

assuming that all ministry will take place at the church building site. Perhaps you'll have to think about using email and the internet for some things that don't necessarily require person to person contact. But to do any or all of these things will require thoughtful and careful planning, the wise allocation of limited resources (ours are limited; God's are limitless!), and a common commitment by the elders, the deacons, and the congregation.

Why now? Why would I encourage you to think about ministry plans now, in the middle of the Fall when this article is printed?

First, because it's never too late to become good stewards of our ministry resources. *Second*, because many elders' boards wisely spend some time in a planning and prayer retreat sometime around the first of the year. Perhaps this article might stimulate a bit of an agenda for that retreat. *Finally*, because a failure to plan is, as the old rubric goes, a plan to fail.

The seriousness of our mission before God demands nothing less than the best, both of planning that is consistent with the Word of God, and of obedient commitment to that Word and the mandate it sets forth.

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Cracking the Code

Les Sillars

Biology's version of the Book of Life is being written, in part, on the 14th through 16th floors of a gleaming medical tower at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston, Texas. Jeans-clad biotechnicians peer at computer screens, poke with sterilized toothpicks at spot-covered gel in trays, and roll racks of test tubes down gray hallways to and from labs filled with banks of thermocyclers, sequencers, and other equipment.

Most workers are under 30 and hold "entry-level" positions. Few hold graduate degrees, and some haven't finished college. It seems an unlikely setting for what President Bill Clinton in March called "the scientific breakthrough of the century, perhaps of all time."

The technicians are nearly finished "sequencing" the entire human genome; that is, determining the order of the three billion pairs of nucleotides that make up human DNA. The Human Genome Sequencing Center at Baylor is one of five major sequencing centers in the United States, with another in Britain, and minor centers scattered around the world. Together they make up the decade old Human Genome Project, an international consortium directed by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the Department of Energy.

The \$250 million Project plans to release its first draft by summer, having sequenced 90 percent of the genome with 99.9 percent accuracy. The sequence is on a publicly available database, allowing researchers to hunt for all 80,000 to 100,000 genes — sections of DNA that are believed to control cell development and operation — in a typical human cell. Scientists use this

genetic map to try to figure out what each gene does and how it works with other genes. They then associate mutations in particular genes with specific diseases.

The sequence of human DNA has been called a periodic table of the elements for human biology, or as a

Mapping the human DNA sequence is a dream come true for many scientists, but the possible consequences are giving bioethicists nightmares. Meanwhile, some observers think Darwinian assumptions cause researchers to place too much emphasis on genes.

— Les Sillars in Houston

recent *Newsweek* story gushed, the "blueprint of human life, the code of codes, the holy grail...what it means to be human." Many believe that this project will revolutionize modern medicine. The media are jumping on the bandwagon; all the attention over the last few years has sent biotech stocks soaring. The final version, expected two years ahead of schedule in 2003, will be, according to NIH National Human Genome Research Institute director Francis Collins, a professing Christian, a "phenomenally significant event in human history."

Perhaps.

Enthusiasts predict that in a few more decades genetic research stimulated by the Human Genome Project will lead to cures and more effective treatments for diseases ranging from cancer to schizophrenia.

Involvement in the Human Genome Project "is a work of discovery which can also be a form of worship," wrote Dr. Collins in 1997. "It is part of our mandate as Christians to pursue such medical advances, attempting to emulate Christ in His healing role," he said.

In 30 years, predicts Dr. Collins, genetic technology will be so advanced that your physical exam will include a complete genetic profiling. The doctor will swab a few cells from inside your cheek and insert them into an analyzer. A computer will compare your genome to the thousands of disease genes identified by then, pin-pointing the illnesses you already have or may develop.

Perhaps.

Doctors will also use genetic technology to prescribe preventative measures, like specialized diets for those at increased risk of heart disease, and regular screening for those with a genetic predisposition for colon cancer. Some presently incurable diseases will be defeated with "gene therapy," the technique of using viruses to insert healthy genes into cells with defective genes.

Eventually, goes the claim, once scientists understand how particular genes cause diseases, they will design drugs accordingly, instead of using the current trial-and-error method. Scientists will know why some drugs and therapies work so well for some patients but put others in the hospital. Doctors will prescribe medications with the least unpleasant side effects for a given patient. Some scientists predict designer babies — or at least the ability to influence hereditary traits like height and intelligence and eye color. In addition, genetic science will produce a host of industrial and agricultural breakthroughs, like toxin-eating bacteria and more pest-resistant crops.

That's the optimistic assessment of the impact of genetic science.

But Celeste Condit, a communications professor at the University of Georgia who writes regularly on ethics and genetics, offers a nightmare scenario that includes:

- routine prenatal genetic screening, with stringent standards for determining which babies live and die;
- the ready availability of genetic testing generating a sort of public hypochondria, with fears of disease far exceeding the actual risks;
- genetic discrimination, with jobs and health insurance denied to those at risk of serious disease;
- the sorting of young children into career tracks and social classes based on their "genetic potential."

At the moment the nightmare seems more real than the dream. Melanie Andrews-Casal, a genetic counselor with Applied Genetics Inc., in Austin, Texas, does mostly prenatal counseling (\$120 per session). She is a member of the National Society of Genetic Counselors which supports abortion and fetal tissue research. "I see myself as an educator," she said, supplying "non-directive facts and statistics related to the options."

Most of her clients whose unborn babies have the gene for diseases severe enough to require life support, choose to abort them, she reported. About half of the parents with Down Syndrome babies kill them in the womb. Several dozen commercially available tests discern diseases like cystic fibrosis and hemophilia, but as the number of tests increases, the demand for prenatal screening could escalate accordingly. Already, reported the *London Daily Telegraph* last month, a British government agency is calling

for genetic screening for all pregnant women, in case "abnormalities" prompt them to seek an abortion.

Some see prenatal genetic screening as modern eugenics. C. Ben Mitchell, assistant professor of bioethics at Trinity International University in Deerfield, Ill., said that it "targets fetuses for destruction, since we don't have cures or treatments for most genetic anomalies."

At present, genetic testing can provide only a range of probabilities. It can't specify when or even if the patient will develop a given disease. Thus, women who test positive for BRCA1 may never suffer breast or ovarian cancer, but "feel like they're walking around with a time bomb," said Ms. Andrews-Casal.

Many more bombs, real or not, will be uncovered when genetic testing becomes readily available and people start ordering their own. Already a Houston company has a national ad campaign for DNA paternity testing. Commuters in 30 major U.S. cities see large, dark billboards with "Who's the father — 1-800-DNA-TYPE" in bold lettering. For \$475, Identigene Inc. does a standard DNA paternity test from a cheek swab.

The company has grown rapidly since its 1993 start, said President Caroline Caskey: "It's a peace-of-mind issue. A lot of our clients just want to have the answers." Results are mailed within a week. Firms like Applied Genetics offer tests for single-gene diseases for as little as \$250. Complicated tests that must check several areas of the genome, like the one for BRCA1, may cost \$2,700 or more, and insurance companies may or may not cover the cost.

Genetic discrimination is presently uncommon, but a series of horror stories prompted federal legislation discouraging the practice in health insurance plans in 1996 (insurance companies may not consider disease genes a "Pre-existing condition"). Last February President

Clinton signed an executive order prohibiting it in federal hiring and promotion practices.

But Mr. Mitchell believes that if the technology is there, people will find a way to abuse it. "All of us have some genetic problems," said Mr. Mitchell, "and as the tests become more sophisticated it's unlikely that we'll find anybody without any mutations."

The ethicist is also concerned that economic pressure to get genetic tests and therapies to market are tempting scientist-CEOs and their venture capital backers to ignore or marginalize once-inviolable research principles and hide information that would drive down the stock prices of their biotech firms.

Last fall, in the most damning incident so far, Jesse Gelsinger, 18, died in a gene therapy experiment for his genetic liver disorder at the University of Pennsylvania. The Food and Drug Administration shut down the program indefinitely, blasting researchers for failing to halt the study when several patients suffered serious side effects, and for failing to report these incidents to the NIH, and for failing to obtain proper consent from patients. The NIH later discovered that gene therapy researchers across the country had not filed reports on 650 "adverse incidents" in a timely fashion.

The dispute over ownership of genetic data is also troubling. Celera Genomics Corporation, a private firm from Rockville, Maryland, is racing the publicly funded project to finish the first genetic map. It developed a powerful new "shot-gun" sequencing method that is still controversial because it leaves large gaps — like having all the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle but not being able to assemble them. Celera has already produced its first "draft" of the human genome. Celera and HGP officials were negotiating a collaboration that might have produced a final version by the

end of this year. Talks broke down in March over whether the sequence would continue to be freely available or whether Celera could control the data, turning biology's Book of Life into a for-profit lending library. Celera now sells its genetic data to subscribers, mostly pharmaceutical and genomics firms.

Defenders of public access say that the human genome is the common property of humanity. Charging for access to the sequencing data will stifle genetic research, they say, and there's too much at stake to allow that. Moreover, the drive to patent genes is a turning into a modern-day gold rush. The chemical sequence of human DNA may not be patented, but individual genes may if the genes function is known. Billions of dollars are at stake.

The companies that identify gene functions and patent them will claim a share of any medical applications produced from that knowledge. Tens of thousands of preliminary patent applications have been filed. The U.S. Patent and Trademark Office is tightening up rules to try to prevent firms from, in effect, taking out the whole Klondike before they know where the gold is.

Christians should start now to influence public debate over genetic ethics, says John Kilner, director of the Center for Bioethics and Human Dignity, a think tank at Trinity International University. The main issues involve privacy of genetic information (should your employer or the government know you're susceptible to hypertension?) and how much genetic manipulation is appropriate. The ethical bottom line, said Mr. Kilner, is that medicine must respect the fact that humans are made in the image of God. "We should go beyond correcting problems to shaping people the way we want them to be," he said.

Questions abound. What's morally wrong with giving your child a better

memory? Would you marry someone with a genetic predisposition to Alzheimer's? Should you ask for premarital testing? It's also difficult to come up with ethical guidelines when nobody knows what therapies will be possible or when they will be available.

Less may be possible than the promoters of genomics predict, and the answers and cures further off. Scientists announce links between genes and diseases almost weekly; some of the more recent are for stomach, cervical, and testicular cancer. But after a decade of research in gene therapy, individual patients have been helped in trials, but there is still scant evidence that

Christians should start now to influence public debate over genetic ethics...

gene therapy can effectively treat any disease. Researchers have been stymied by the body's immune system which attacks the viruses attempting to insert the "healthy" genes.

Nobody knows which human characteristics are genetically determined and which are affected by environment or other factors. "I think people will be very surprised at what is genetically determined and what isn't," predicted Richard Gibbs, a Baylor molecular biology professor and director of Baylor's Sequencing Center.

Jonathan Wells, a molecular biologist with the Discovery Institute, argues that genes, environment, and cell structure all affect development. DNA controls the production of proteins that affect development, but the cytoskeleton (a network of microscopic fibers) and certain features in the cell membrane determine what happens to these proteins after they are made.

This helps explain why, when the "developmental genes" from a fruit

fly are inserted into a mouse embryo, it continues to develop along conventional mouse-embryo patterns until the lack of the correct proteins kills it. "It would be more accurate to say that a developmental program is written into the structure of the entire fertilized egg, in a language of which we are still largely ignorant," he said.

"The notion that genes control development is a fallout from neo-Darwinian evolutionary theory," Mr. Wells added. Evolutionists use genetic mutations to explain how organisms could change gradually over time. But if development involves the entire egg, then its complexity is much stronger evidence that a Creator designed life.

Mr. Wells also questions whether genes determine most diseases. Some single-gene disorders, like cystic fibrosis, clearly are mainly genetic, he said. But the only way researchers can now connect a disease with a particular gene is by statistical correlation studies — that is, they hunt for common genetic patterns in people with the disease. "But correlation is not cause," he pointed out, "and the correlations aren't even very good in many of these cases."

If many factors — in addition to DNA — do affect diseases, this would help explain why only some of the people with the gene for a given disease actually develop it, and why severity varies wildly among people with the same gene. The claim that diseases are the result of interactions between genes that have yet to be discovered "is still only a theory," he said. The correlations between genes and behaviors, like alcoholism and homosexuality, or genes and psychological characteristics, like intelligence, are "even dicier than the connection with disease." The implication is that fighting disease is a far more complex problem than simply getting healthy genes into sick tissue.

If cancer is not genetic, said Mr. Wells, "then a cure for it might be found sooner if researchers would stop looking in the wrong place. As for designer babies, *what this world needs is not more people with good*

looks or athletic ability, but more people with moral fiber and high principles. Whatever else might be said, sequencing the human genome is a much smaller advance than its promoters claim."

This article is reprinted from *World*, April/2000.

Dark Lord Appears to Reside in Amsterdam. Could it Happen Here?

Case Van Kempen

Many contemporary Christians give little thought to the existence of an individual known variously as Beelzebub, Satan, or simply the Devil. He is often portrayed as a tiny comic character, a red-horned, pointy-tailed mini-demon whispering into the ear of a person who is struggling with a moral dilemma.

This is not a new phenomenon. Even as a child, I recall reading "Hot Stuff" comics in which the hero was a pint-sized demon who, in spite of his best efforts to do wrong, usually ended up doing the right thing.

If only the real devil was so inclined!

Unfortunately, our family's recent visit to Amsterdam convinces me of just the opposite. As we briefly visited that city, I kept thinking to myself, "So this is what it's like when Satan wins."

It's been 20 years since I last spent any time in Amsterdam. I remember it as bright, lively and artsy, a fun place to shop, visit museums, attend concerts, or just sit outside and

enjoy strong Dutch coffee. Even late at night, when a Dutch cousin took me along on a memorable "pub crawl," I never felt anxious about my personal safety.

This time I did. The city wasn't nearly as clean or bright as I remembered, and I became increasingly anxious as we walked from our hotel to the Central Train Station. Part of it may have been the smell of marijuana, openly sold and smoked at the sidewalk cafes I once enjoyed so much (our tour guide had informed us that if a restaurant had a clover on the door, it meant that you could purchase drugs there).

Part of it was the fact that we saw no other families in the area; no senior citizens or young children, either. Just an ocean of backpack-toting young people, many of whom looked as if they were trying to see Europe on the dollar-a-day plan.

Frequent signs warning about pick-pockets raised my anxiety another notch, as did many of the advertising posters along the streets which displayed more of the female form than we are accustomed to seeing in the States. I remembered a milder form of this from 20 years ago, but what was new this time was the spread of the once well-contained "red light" district.

Fearing that this famous area was becoming a kind of ghetto, the city leaders moved many of the prostitutes into other parts of the city. As

our family was looking for a restaurant, we inadvertently walked right past a live-action, X-rated window display.

When I commented about this experience to one of my Dutch relatives a few days later, he responded by shrugging his shoulders and saying, "Well, that's part of life too, isn't it?" He seemed proud of his country's permissiveness, and didn't quite understand why we would find it objectionable.

To me, this was the final evidence that Satan has won almost a complete victory over Amsterdam. Church attendance there is almost non-existent (many churches which had worshiping congregations for 500 years or more are now museums); living together is the norm; drugs and sex are sold as openly as bread and cheese; and the people who should care the most shrug their shoulders and say, "Well, that's life."

Could it happen here? Go back fifty or a hundred years and ask someone in Amsterdam if it could happen there. One of Satan's most effective methods is to whisper that it couldn't happen to us. But believe me, all it takes is one visit to Amsterdam to convince you that it could.

This article is reprinted from the *Holland Sentinel*.

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PCA Addresses Various Issues

Dr. Morton H. Smith, the first Stated Clerk of the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) and one of the founders of Greenville (S.C.) Presbyterian Theological Seminary and current Dean, presided over the 28th General Assembly of the PCA at its meeting in Tampa, Florida, June 20-23.

The General Assembly/Mission to North America (GA/MNA) Permanent Committee was instructed by last year's General Assembly to study the issue of women of the church speaking and teaching in public, and to present clear guidelines to the 28th General Assembly of their application of 1 Timothy 2:11-12 and other Scripture.

This report, presented by the GA/MNA Permanent Committee, recognized the fact that often PCA conferences and seminars include a time of worship and that the preaching of the Word at these services must be restricted to elders (teaching and ruling) only. However, seminars are usually designed to provide church leadership with greater insights and skills for ministry. Since this context is not a worship service, the content does not require the same degree of protection as the content of worship. "The primary difference between the preaching of the Word in worship and the subject matter of seminars has at its heart the issue of authority. The content of seminars is not intended to carry the weight to which the description 'teach or have authority over' (1 Timothy 2:11-12) would apply. The context of this passage is the Apostle's presentation of instructions for the proper conduct of public worship and not that of the more informal seminar which is generally more subjective, informal and based on personal experience than is the

preaching of the Word in worship." The general assembly voted to adopt the committee's report which is now offered to Sessions (consistories) to use as guidelines for determining the role of women in the church.

The General Assembly also approved Reformed University Ministries (RUM) as a separate permanent committee. This decision will require the approval of the General Assembly of 2001 because it will require amendments to the *Book of Church Order* and *Rules of Assembly Operation* which must be passed by a two-thirds majority. Currently RUM has ministries on sixty campuses in 21 states with over 100 staff members serving as campus ministers, interns and office personnel. The budget for RUM this fiscal year is over \$5 million.

In regard to the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) it was proposed that the assembly authorize its representatives to the National Association of Presbyterian and Reformed Churches (NAPARC) to propose expulsion of the CRC from that body if it failed to rescind its position of allowing ordination of women as pastors and elders. It was reported to the assembly that the CRC synod had met, and had declined to reverse this position, and so the assembly voted overwhelmingly to authorize pursuit of expulsion from NAPARC.

The Creation Study Committee submitted its report regarding the *length of the days of creation*. The historicity of Genesis 1 and 2, plus a thorough detailed affirmation of all the details of the creation account had been almost unanimously affirmed by the General Assembly of 1999 (see *The Outlook*, July-August, 1999). The study committee was commended repeatedly for the thoroughness and accuracy of its representation of the viewpoints on the length of the days of creation held by members of the Reformed community at large, both now and

in the past. These viewpoints include those who advocate six 24-hour days, longer periods of God's creative activity (day-age interpretation), the "framework interpretation," and the "analogical days interpretation."

The committee recommended that there be no further action on this report for two years, that the report be disseminated to the churches and presbyteries for careful consideration. Frank Barker, retired pastor of Briarwood Presbyterian Church in Birmingham, Alabama, offered a motion which was approved and included the words: "That since historically in Reformed theology there has been a diversity of views of the creation days among highly respected theologians, and since the PCA has from its inception allowed a diversity, that the assembly affirm that such diversity as covered in this report is acceptable as long as the full historicity of the creation account is accepted."

Several hundred commissioners (delegates) registered their negative votes for various reasons: a desire to send the report to the churches as the committee had proposed; a desire to have the assembly acknowledge that the "Westminster Divines" (framers of the *Westminster Confession*) had understood the "days" of creation as "calendar days" and any candidate seeking to enter the PCA should declare an "exception" upon examination; a desire to simply accept the report as it stands. The matter will most certainly be brought back to a future general assembly, maybe as early as next year. Perhaps the most nagging question to members both within and without the PCA (because almost all Reformed denominations tolerate some diversity on this matter) is this: Should an affirmation of 24-hour days be a "litmus test" for orthodoxy, for membership or denial of membership in a denomination?

Anyone desiring a copy of the Creation Study Committee Report may communicate with The Outlook editors.