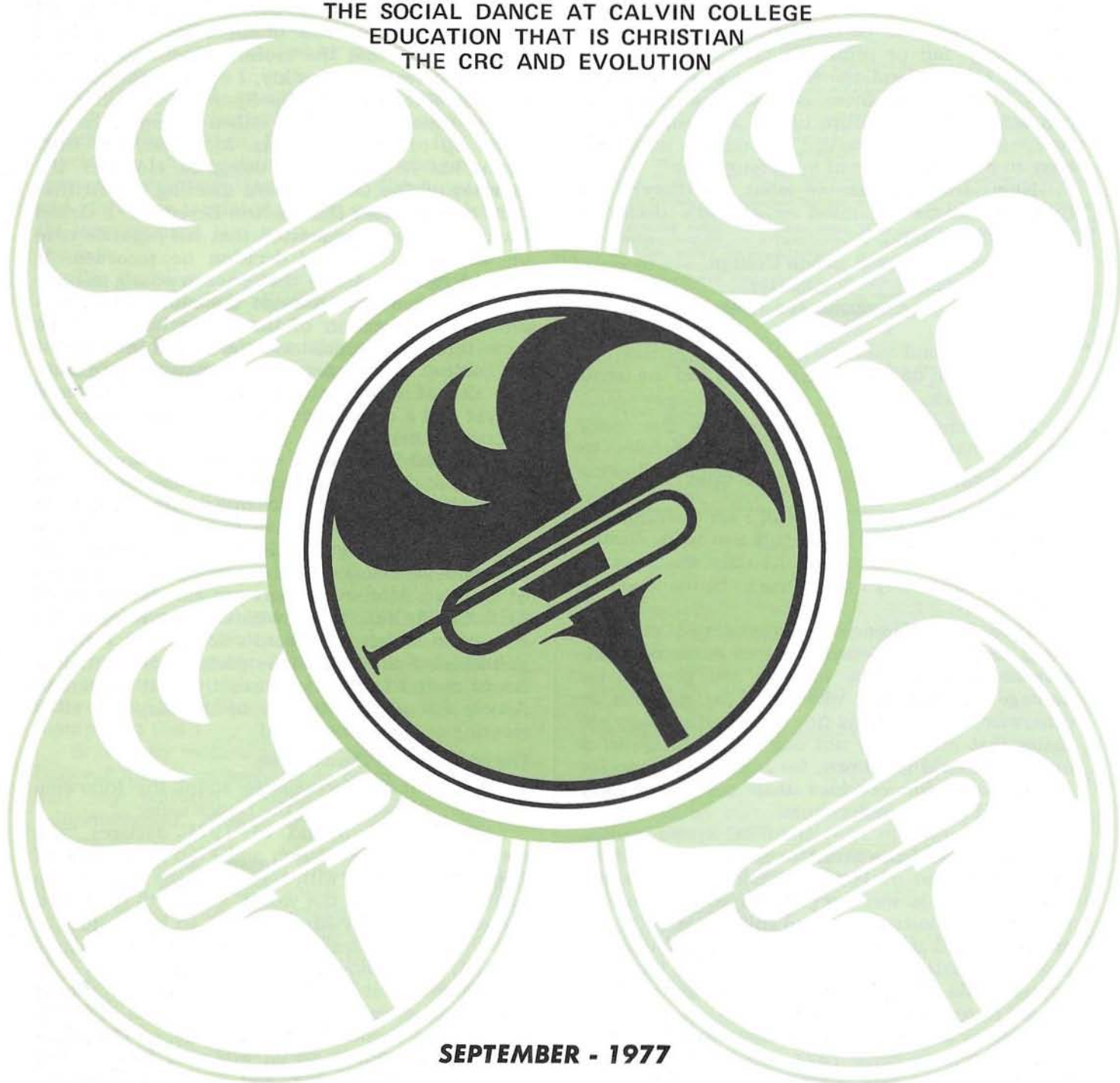


The Outlook

THE SOCIAL DANCE AT CALVIN COLLEGE
EDUCATION THAT IS CHRISTIAN
THE CRC AND EVOLUTION



SEPTEMBER - 1977

SIGNALS FROM THE CRC SYNOD OF '77

The Social Dance

AT CALVIN COLLEGE

JOHN VANDER PLOEG

The CRC Synod of '77 has something to say to all who still have ears to hear and eyes to see. This year's Synod is giving out signals — ominous signals — so loud and clear that he who runs may read.

Religious dullards, deliberate cop-outs, those whose chief concern is not to rock the boat, and those who want to be comfortable at any and all costs, may fail or refuse to take note of these signals. Liberals and the like (the foe within the gate) may tell us there is really no cause for concern as to the future of the Reformed faith. And, as the saying has it, "The devil is never too busy to rock the cradle of a sleeping saint."

Now, these signals — what are they? The following come to mind — Synod's decisions concerning:

- Social dancing at Calvin College
- the so-called Verhey matter
- Harry Boer versus the doctrine of reprobation
- divorce and marriage guidelines
- the vote on the lodge question and the trend it reveals.

My intention is to consider only the *social dancing matter* at this time and hopefully to continue a discussion on these matters in following issues.

It was a shocker — Although I am thankful and even proud to profess to be and also to be classed by others as a *conservative* (if only the term be rightly understood!) I do refuse to be branded as a *legalist*.

There is a difference. A *conservative* is one who clings tenaciously to and seeks to *conserve* whatever he believes to be valuable and good in his heritage or tradition, whether it be religious or otherwise. For the bona fide conservative there are basics that are simply not negotiable. A *legalist* is one who would lay down, for himself and also for others, laws for conduct that are not clearly prescribed as such in Scripture.

For example. In 1951 the CRC Synod wanted a clarification of the thrust or import of the stand the CRC Synod of 1928 had taken on "Worldly amusements." It was my position as a member of the 1951 committee then and still is that 1928 was not to be read and employed as a piece of legalism. In certain matters room must be left for Christian liberty while, at the same time, *this may never be abused to tolerate sinful license*.

Well, as a CRC we have come a long, long way in these matters since 1928 and 1951. It is very urgent for us to take stock to know whether this

has been for good or for evil. Specifically, how is so-called "social dancing" looked upon in the CRC today? The CRC Synod of '77 has left us with a number of highly important signals; and the first of these, to which I wish to call your attention is the one that pertains to social dancing.

Simply stated, the Calvin Board (composed largely of CRC ministers and a minority of laymen) decided to approve of and to introduce social dancing at Calvin College.

Shock-proof as one becomes in times like these, I'll admit that this still came across as a shocker to me. And when this matter was reported at Synod, and when Dr. Harry Holwerda (an M.D. from De Motte, Indiana and serving as a delegate from Classis Illiana) made a motion to *disapprove* of this decision of the Calvin Board, and when I naively expected that the CRC Synod would certainly endorse such disapproval, and when I heard instead that the motion to disapprove was soundly defeated — frankly, I could hardly believe my ears. Was that really the Synod of our CRC?

As stated above, the Calvin Board is largely made up of CRC ministers. Moreover, the CRC Synod has 76 ministers as delegates. However, the minutes of the Calvin Board meeting record that only one member (Mr. Berton Sevensma, a Grand Rapids attorney) requested that his *negative vote* on the social dancing decision be recorded. It seemed significant also that it was a young medical doctor at Synod who made the motion to *disapprove* of this action of the Calvin Board. To be sure, there were ministers who spoke in favor of the motion to *disapprove* but it is worthy of note and also of appreciative recognition that it was a lawyer and a medical doctor who spoke up as they did on this matter.

The Calvin Board's decision — Now, in all fairness, it is well to record the decision of the Calvin Board on *social dancing* in its entirety. It might be sufficient to give only the gist of the decision but I am giving the full text to avoid the risk of being charged with quoting the decision out of context. Moreover, there are among readers of THE OUTLOOK those who do not receive *The Banner* in which the Board's action was recently published. Following is the decision of the Calvin Board re the Dance Issue exactly as it appears in Article 53 of the Minutes of the May 27, 1977 meeting of the Calvin Board:

Decisions re the Dance Issue

A. A motion prevails to adopt the following statement of position re the Dance issue:

Whereas the Synod of 1971 declares "the conclusions of the Church and Film Arts study of 1966, particularly 'with respect to the relationship of the Christian to the world' and 'with respect to the exercise of Christian liberty', to be a guide for the churches in dealing with the matter of dancing" (Acts of Synod, 1971, p. 139; and

Whereas out of concern for the increasing practice of social dancing on the campus of Calvin College, the President of the College, on December 1, 1976, appointed an *ad hoc* (for this matter) Committee on Dancing, and said Committee re-

ported its findings to the President and the Board of Trustees at its meeting of May 23, 1977 and days following,

The Board of Trustees states its position on this matter in the following way:

1. The Board instructs the Administration to implement immediately the development of social dancing in a Christian manner by:

a. instructing its art, music, drama, and physical education departments to provide leadership and direction in using the social dance in a Christian way, and

b. "All Christians, according to the talents God has given them, must work positively and constructively to fulfill the cultural mandate" (Acts of Synod, 1966, p. 34).

c. A policy allowing students the freedom to dance ought to be accompanied by instructions to those who guide these students to provide leadership in implementation, and by instructions, to the students themselves.

2. The Board accepts the recommendation included in the report of the *ad hoc* Committee on Dancing that Calvin College "allow for social dancing as an acceptable, and wholesome, on-campus, recreational activity for Calvin students and staff", as regulated by the guidelines given in the same report.

Ground:

The decision of Synod (1971) provides a sound basis for the College to authorize dancing within the above guidelines.

3. The Board instructs the Administration to delay implementation of this policy until September 1978.

Grounds:

a. This will allow the Calvin College community the time needed to implement the development of social dancing in a Christian manner.

b. This will allow the Calvin College constituency and the Christian Reformed churches and assemblies the time needed to express a collective mind on the position of the Board of Trustees. (Note: Mr. B. Sevensma [a Grand Rapids attorney] requested that his negative vote be recorded on Points 1 and 2.) (Not a single negative vote by a CRC minister member is recorded — but just this one member, an attorney. Some of you whose pastors are Calvin Board members may wish to ask them about this.)

B. It is by motion decided that approval of the Dance Policy is understood to be in principle and that any editorial changes be referred to the Administration, subject to the approval of the officers of the Board.

C. A motion prevails that the publication of the Board's position on social dancing on Calvin College incorporate the directives to the churches adopted by the Synod of 1966 with respect to the "Relationship of the Christian to the World" and the "Exercise of Christian Liberty" (Acts of Synod 1966, pp. 33, 34).

Grounds:

1. These directives form the broader framework for this policy.

THE

OUTLOOK



"And the three companies blew the trumpets . . . and held THE TORCHES in their left hands, and THE TRUMPETS in their right hands . . . and they cried, The sword of Jehovah and of Gideon" (Judges 7:20).

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2. These directives serve to redeem from the secular context our understanding and practice of dancing.

Note: For these directives see the President's Report III, pages 108 and 109.

There you have it! The Calvin Board's Report on social dancing at Calvin. This then is the stand of the Board of which the CRC Synod 1977 with a decisive vote refused to disapprove!

Significant signals in all this — When signals are flashing and bells are ringing at a railroad crossing to the danger of an oncoming, speeding train, a motorist or pedestrian must be blind, deaf, drunk, or bent upon suicide if he fails to take warning. CRC constituents are no less to be pitied if they now refuse to pay attention. Consider then a few of these signals:

1. Signal number one that should come through loud and clear to those who have long supported Calvin is that "onze school" and the CRC have changed radically. The social dance, by a synodical decision of 1928, was branded as being disreputable and a worldly amusement to be shunned. But now it is being advocated as something to be made "Christian" and as having a potential for the fulfillment of "the cultural mandate."

How unrealistic and naive can we get to be! There are other voices to which we do far better to listen. Writing in HIS MAGAZINE, Dwight Small in an article (Dec., 1962) on "Dating — with or without Dancing" writes:

"Even medical science clearly identifies dancing as a sex stimulant, going so far as to define it as an erotic exercise, as part of the sexual commerce itself. *Medical Review of Reviews* states: 'There can be scarcely any doubt that dancing came about as an adjunct of sexual stimulation.' Professor W. C. Wilkinson of the University of Chicago analyzed the modern dance as 'a system of means, contrived with more than human ingenuity, to excite the instinct of sex into action'. Roman Catholic Archbishop Spaulding of New York said that the confessional reveals the fact that nearly every known lapse of female virtue is traceable to the dance."

Are we really so gullible now as to think that the social dance can be made "Christian" and a fulfillment of the "cultural mandate"? To be sure, the signal says that times have changed and the CRC along with it — but definitely in the wrong direction!

2. Signal number two in all this is to the effect that as members of the CRC we may be conscience-bound to make an agonizing reappraisal of our practice of automatically paying the Calvin quota year after year. "Yes", a pastor of a large CRC congregation has said, "we still pay our quotas, but our hearts are no longer in it." Others are outspoken about it that they refuse to pay for Calvin any longer. Anyone who calls this mutiny may make the most of it as he will. Do I still pay the Calvin quota? Yes, but with misgivings, and I do not mind sharing with you that we will tentatively continue paying but only *under protest*

and to encourage others to do likewise — and that my intention is to notify our consistory and also the Calvin Board to this effect. To be sure, this may not make a dent or even cause a ripple as to Calvin's ability to carry on — but at least I will then be able to live with myself and with my conscience. And so — now that's off my chest.

3. Signal number three is the message conveyed by the foregoing to Dordt and Trinity Colleges, to our Christian high schools in the U.S. and Canada, to Calvinist Youth United, and to all young people (and also to those who are older) throughout the CRC. If social dancing is to be acceptable and even encouraged at Calvin by decisions of the Calvin Board and the 1977 CRC Synod, why should it not be allowed now elsewhere and to others? Those who clamor for allowing the social dance at their schools or even church activities will see the green light and will now have their school boards and consistories over a barrel if they are going to object. Didn't the Calvin Board and the Synod realize what a Pandora's box they were opening up! Never in all the years I have attended CRC Synods as a delegate, as editor of *The Banner*, and as an observer, have I felt so heartsick re the future of the church as at this 1977 Synod.

4. Signal number four, as I see it, is one that comes to the conscientious student who wants no part of what the Board and the Synod now encourage. I choose to believe that there are at Calvin God-fearing young men and young women who choose to keep their distance from the world instead of getting as close to it as possible while still wanting to be Christian. Such young people may very well find themselves to be misfits at Calvin, out of step not only with fellow-students, but also with the authorities.

It's a shocking thing to try to tell these non-dancing students that to engage in the social dance is one way in which their talents ought to be put to use to fulfill "the cultural mandate." Think of the awful responsibility of leading such young people astray. Am I all wrong if at this point I call to mind our Lord's warning: 'Whoso shall cause one of these little ones to stumble, it is profitable for him that a great millstone should be hanged about his neck, and that he should be sunk in the depth of the sea' (Matt. 18:6). That's the Book and the Word we still go by, isn't it?

5. Another signal — number five — says something to the discerning student who is not misled by the Board's attempt to justify the social dance as they intend to have it at Calvin. A case in point is the following quote from a letter by Dirk Miedema of Phepston, Ontario, published in *Calvinist-Contact* (July 15, 1977):

"Dear Sir: I am a 1977 graduate of Calvin College. I was somewhat disturbed to read that the Board of Trustees at Calvin College will be allowing social dancing at Calvin. However, I'm not as disturbed with their decision as I am with their means of justifying their decision. They justify dancing at Calvin by saying that it will be creative, educational and to the glory of God. This is a real

joke for many of us who know that dancing is done for enjoyment, for entertainment and not for its creative or educational values. No matter how many good intentions the Board of Trustees has, dancing will always be just that, at Calvin, or anywhere else”

6. Signal six is a message to godly parents to the effect that they should be aware of the wrong influence to which their sons and daughters will be exposed even when they entrust them to Calvin for their college education. Parental prayers are urgently needed for the young people, and now more than ever. True, there are a number of excellent teachers at Calvin whose influence and teaching can be an influence for great good. However, the gold is being dimmed, and concerned parents could very well feel the need of further consideration as to which school is the better choice for their children's college education. Of course, we are still being given the coming year in which we may protest the Calvin Board's recent decision re the social dance. However, in view of the Synod's decision *not to disapprove* of this social-dancing decision, can we still believe that protests will now be anything more than another exercise in futility?

7. Signal seven — and that should suffice — we profess in our Heidelberg Catechism re the seventh commandment in Lord's Day 41 that

“God condemns all unchastity.

We should therefore thoroughly detest it and, married or single, live decent and chaste lives. “We are temples of the Holy Spirit, body and soul, and God wants both to be kept clean and holy.

That is why He forbids everything which incites unchastity, whether it be actions, looks, talk, thoughts, or desires.”

Or has language like that now gotten to be for “squares” only?

We will let the sophisticated wisecrack say what he will. However, the born-again, Spirit-filled person cannot feel at home or be assured that he is in the company of the redeemed unless he still follows old-fashioned guidelines like that as it comes straight from the Word of God — the Book by which we still profess both to live by and also to die. ●

Everyone Invited!

What: Address by Dr. Robert D. Preus

Prominent Lutheran Missouri Synod Leader
and President of Concordia Theological Seminary
Fort Wayne, Indiana

Where: Oakdale Park Christian Reformed Church

When: October 20, 1977 — 8:00 p.m.

Sponsored by Reformed Fellowship, Inc.

FOR ELDERS AND DEACONS

(11)



REV. HARRY G. ARNOLD

Deacons – Ministers of Mercy (2)

In this eleventh article in his series, *For Elders and Deacons*, Rev. Harry G. Arnold writes: “Let our deacons be the conscience of the church to minister to the physical needs of a sorely distressed world. Thus, in conjunction with the ministry of the Word, the church will minister to the whole man — body and soul.” Rev. Arnold is pastor of the First Christian Reformed Church of Lansing, Illinois.

It was stated in the last article that the Reformed community of churches is basically agreed on the idea that the office of deacon originated with Acts 6, and that its central task is that of extending mercy in Christ's name. Hence, deacons are the ministers of mercy in a Reformed church. They are called to serve and must prepare themselves to serve others in the name of Christ. This is a distinct honor and privilege to be able to represent Christ in His benevolent care of His own.

There are many ways in which deacons may serve others. In our minds we often limit the deacons' service to that of rendering financial aid. No doubt this is a large part of their work of mercy to others. But that is not all that a deacon may do. This article will be concerned to point out some of the ways that deacons may serve others as Christ's ministers of mercy.

Be Aware of the Church Order — Since the *Church Order* regulates the church's “organization and activities,” every deacon ought to be aware of its provisions. It is especially important that every deacon concentrate his thoughts on article 25 of the *Church Order*. Article 25 sets forth the basic task and duties of the office of deacon. While only one article is devoted to the specific task of the deacon's office, nevertheless, it sets forth a broad mandate which allows for a wide range of activity. It doesn't take too much imagination to realize how much work could be carried on within the broad scope of the words of part a:

The task of the deacons is to administer mercy toward those who are in need, first of all toward

those of the household of faith, but also toward the needy in general.

This task allows the deacons a wide open door through which to enter and carry on mercy in Christ's name.

Moreover, parts *b* and *c* of Article 25 expand the horizon of the deacons' service by providing for the "use of Christian institutions of mercy," and cooperation "with diaconates of neighboring churches when this is desirable for the proper performance of their task." In addition to the above, the deacons "may also seek mutual understandings with other agencies in their community which are caring for the needy, so that the gifts may be distributed properly" (part *d*). Please note the change of wording in part *b* and *c* from that of *d*. In parts *b* and *c*, the deacons *shall* do the things stipulated. In part *d*, the deacons *may* seek understandings with other agencies. Parts *b* and *c* are mandatory aspects of the deacons' work. Part *d* is permissible where that is deemed wise and necessary in any given situation. It is not mandatory. Each situation must be judged on its own merits.

Be Concerned with Your Office — Another way in which the deacons may serve others better as Christ's ministers of mercy is to be concerned with their office. By that I mean that sufficient time should be devoted to the task of being a deacon. There are many incidental assignments that consistory members are given which, strictly speaking, are not related to their office. These were mentioned in an earlier article (No. 3) as matters that pertain to the "general government of the church." These assignments often include those duties which devolve upon elders and deacons by virtue of the fact that they are also the trustees of the church. Thus, "corporation matters" become their concern as trustees rather than as office bearers.

Now while corporation matters cannot be neglected, they must not be allowed to overshadow the matters that pertain to the distinctive tasks of the offices. It seems all too obvious then that separate deacons' meetings are desirable if the deacons are to concentrate properly on their office. This may not be necessary in a small congregation. But wherever possible the deacons ought to meet separately and devote themselves to their specific task of being ministers of mercy. The church and community will be the beneficiaries where the deacons give special attention to their specific office.

Be Imaginative and Aggressive — It is probably true that most of the assistance given by our deacons has been by way of financial help to the poor. However, it is often supposed by some that the deacons must wait for the poor to come to them for aid. Dr. Peter Y. De Jong supplies a much needed antidote to this mistaken conception when he writes:

It is so regrettable that in many congregations the deacons seem to be of the opinion that the poor must apply for aid. This is contrary to the nature and spirit of the office instituted by our merciful and compassionate Highpriest. For surely our Savior did not wait with extending

aid until men called on Him. Rather, He came to seek and to save that which was lost. (*The Ministry of Mercy for Today*, pp. 183-184).

It is proper for our deacons to be aggressive when they see or hear of a need. Let them investigate and consider if their ministry of mercy is required.

It is well that our deacons also be imaginative in today's world. The ministry of mercy is not limited to paying for rent and groceries, physical and mental health care, and the like. No, people have a variety of needs today and our deacons are the ones who serve others in behalf of Christ and His church. For example, with the decline (and sometimes the demise) of public transportation it is not uncommon for elderly people to need someone to take them to church, to the doctor, or to some other necessary appointment. Let our deacons consider how they may be of help. Again, many of our elderly may be in need of counsel and assistance with regard to finances. Social Security payments will only stretch so far. The church must see to it that they do not suffer want of essential things for lack of money. Let our deacons give attention to this matter. Think also of the needs of parents raising children in today's world where constant inflation eats away at people's buying power. Is it possible that some children suffer lack of proper medical or dental care, or even Christian school education, because of their parents' inability to provide these? Shouldn't these be matters for our deacons to consider? Just to mention one more example, consider the great need of many of today's youth for mental and emotional stability. Some may need the services of trained counsellors but cannot afford the expense. Surely, our deacons could be of great assistance in such cases. A little imagination on the part of our deacons and our churches will soon indicate that there is still much to be done to assist the needy in the name of Christ.

Be Alert to Varied Needs — It is altogether proper for any member of the congregation to bring to the attention of the deacons someone else's needs. Dr. De Jong put it this way:

The presence of poverty and need in the congregation may be brought to the attention of the diaconate by the pastor, the elders or members of the congregation as well as by the investigation of the deacons themselves. Instead of being resented by those who are charged with the work of mercy, this should be greatly appreciated (*Ibid.*, p. 184).

There is no doubt that our deacons have been helped greatly in their work over the years by the members of the congregation who have informed them of someone's special need. It is my judgment that our elders often have discovered needy families through the process of family visitation. By referring this information to the deacons they have been of assistance to them in their work of mercy.

Likewise it is altogether proper for the deacons to be alert to the varied needs of the people to whom they minister. All people do not need assistance in terms of dollars and cents, yet they do need the

"counsel and assistance" of our deacons. Let the deacons be alert to this matter that even when direct material assistance is not required, there may still be the need for counsel with a family or an individual.

It is especially important that deacons be alert to identifying spiritual needs that ought to be referred to the elders. Here they can render great assistance to the undershepherds of the church by calling to their attention the needs of people who may require spiritual counsel by the elders. It has been my experience that our deacons have been of great help to the elders in this area of church life. Let the deacons continue to be alert to discover the varied needs of people and then see to it that those needs are properly met.

Be Men of Vision — We live in a rapidly changing world and often new ways of meeting people's needs have to be found. Our Christian Reformed Church realized this when it organized the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee in 1962. The care of the needy is not to be restricted to the people of our local congregations, nor even to Christian peoples outside of our congregation. The whole of mankind is sick and sore distressed. The church must be concerned to minister to all people. Of course, the people of God have the priority in our ministrations. But we must not forget the injunction: "let us work that which is good toward all men" (Gal. 6:10). Let our deacons minister to their own churches and communities, while keeping in view the broad vision of a world in need. In cooperation with our Christian Reformed World Relief Committee, much mercy can be ministered by our deacons in the name of Christ.

As the CRWRC seeks to show diaconal vision on the denominational level, so our deacons ought to show diaconal vision on the local level. There is nothing wrong with finding new ways to minister in Christ's name. It would be altogether legitimate for our deacons to operate a clothing distribution agency if its given neighborhood could be served by it, provided the Christian character of mercy could be manifested. For numbers of years many of our city missions have supplied food and clothing to the indigent in connection with the ministry of the Word. Would it not be a happy union of the ministry of the Word and the ministry of mercy, if our deacons were involved in such projects of material assistance? The fact that the church's first task is to preach the gospel is no excuse to neglect the ministry of mercy. And if one diaconate cannot carry on a project with its own resources, the *Church Order* allows for consultation and cooperation with other diaconates.

Let our deacons be the conscience of the church to minister to the physical needs of a sorely distressed world. Thus, in conjunction with the ministry of the Word, the church will minister to the whole man — body and soul.

Let our deacons have a vision as broad as that of Christ Himself . . . "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these my brethren, even these least, ye did it unto me" (Matt. 25:40). ●

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In Memoriam

REV. WILLIAM KOK 1882-1977



REV. WILLIAM KOK

The late Rev. William Kok, always a zealous contender for the faith, was a member of Reformed Fellowship, Inc. and a contributor to TORCH AND TRUMPET (former name of THE OUTLOOK) in bygone days. Dr. William Rutger's readiness to write this *In Memoriam* is greatly appreciated.

Factual statistics of a man's life can be told in a few sentences. But within that framework for Rev. Kok, was a full measure of experience that covered almost every aspect of human life. Born of Christian parents, William and Beana Kok in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, in 1882, the sizeable family emigrated to Grand Rapids, Michigan in 1908. The family affiliated themselves with the Eastern Avenue Christian Reformed Church, then pastored by the eloquent and dynamic preacher, Rev. John Groen. This preaching made a deep, indelible impression on young William, and a year after coming to Grand Rapids, he made profession of his faith. Father Kok was a baker by trade, and due to circumstances, young William was compelled to help the family make a living. As a young lad there burned in his heart a strong desire to enter into the ministry, should a way be open for it. After a few years of schooling William accepted a teaching position in a struggling small Christian school in Randolph Wisconsin. Here Kok met his bride to be, Effie VanderZon. From that marriage were born five children: three sons: William, Peter, John Calvin; and two daughters: Gertrude and Beatrice.

Circumstances opened for young William to enroll in Calvin Preparatory School in 1918 which led to Calvin College and Seminary, from which he graduated gaining an A.B and a B.D. degree in 1924. As a candidate for the ministry he received a call from Lebanon, Iowa and in the summer of 1924 he was ordained as a minister of the Word and Sacraments. His capacities as a minister gained early recognition and after three years he was called to minister the large congregation of Zeeland I where he remained for 13 years. Here he grappled with a challenge of supreme importance: the need for Christian instruction in the day school. Strong

covenant convictions with its imperative demands on parents who had their children baptized, impelled Kok to press with might and main this cause. Did such covenantal proclamation of the gospel and such deep conviction that this was God's demand issue in favorable results? Well, ask the people living in Zeeland for an answer to that question. Kok was able to convince even those who bitterly opposed him at first, that Christian instruction was a God-given necessity. Today Christian day schools flourish in Zeeland; and generally in the so-called "colony."

Calvin was experiencing growing pains in 1940, and the Board decided to give the President of Calvin College an assistant. Kok was their choice. But the program of his duties was not well-articulated or spelled out and Kok experienced frustration just how to manage that position. After two years, he received a call to the prestigious large congregation of Englewood First in Chicago. Here Kok labored with much blessing and joy for eleven years. Here he found people eager to hear his covenantal preaching of the gospel and to follow his guidance and stimulation for various kingdom programs. Not only was Christian education demanded for all normal covenant children, but no less for the less favored: the handicapped children. A program for them began in the basement of the local congregation; it expanded and is now Elim School for the handicapped, one of the finest institutions for handicapped children in the country. Kok proved to be a most effective promoter for this school.

Also another great kingdom cause had the love of Kok's heart: the Back to God Radio Hour. Music for that program, which originated in Chicago at that time, was provided by the choir of Englewood I. In God's providence that congregation had a wonderful organ and no less a most accomplished organist just at the right time! As a member of the Board of the Back to God Hour, Kok put in much time and effort to see that enterprise flourish and rapidly expand. Kok loved music and he did much to stimulate this dimension of worship. Ask the remaining members of Englewood I how that congregation literally echoed and rang with the singing of the Dutch psalms and the hymns of the church. With dynamic, powerful, dramatic preaching of the gospel echoing and thoroughly imbued with the Reformed persuasion and slant, that church was packed to capacity Sunday after Sunday. Church attendance was a delight; the hungry souls were nourished on the Word; there was no loss or neutralizing of the centrality of the Word in the worship services. Kok never stooped to introducing fads and novelties in order to gain an audience. The Word itself is fully adequate and sufficient! Kok's last congregation was Immanuel in Grand Rapids. He retired in 1958 and then for four years taught Bible at South Christian High.

Being thoroughly conversant with the Dutch language proved to be of incalculable blessing to Rev. Kok. He was able to share the genial insights of some of the best Dutch theologians of two

generations past. He eagerly read the monumental works of the genial Abraham Kuyper, whose facile pen could move hearts and make them glow to become valiant defenders of the Reformed faith. What a powerful influence Kuyper's *E Voto* made in catechism preaching; giving thrust and perspective and genial insights into this grand book of instruction: the Heidelberg Catechism. What compares even faintly with the monumental work of the genial Herman Bavinck on Reformed Dogmatics? Incidentally, that work is no less a history of Christian doctrine, from the Reformed perspective. How eloquent is its biblical orientation! The works in our language were also available to Kok, such works from the pens of the Hodges, Warfield, Machen, and many others. These works made Kok a bold and undaunted communicator of the Reformed persuasion in his preaching.

Kok was delegated to Synod eight times: 1926, '28; '32; '34; '36; '37; '45; '52. The dates will indicate the importance of those Synods, the issues debated and the decisions taken.

One never needed to guess where Kok stood on basic issues. He clearly articulated his convictions; he never shied away from controversy when circumstances demanded it; he feared not the scars of battle for the faith once for all delivered; he stood up to be counted when this was demanded and when it was meaningful.

Kok began his ministry in every congregation he served with these two sermons: Psalm 27:4 Our Only Desire; and 1 Timothy 1:15 The Gospel of Salvation. Though sometimes seemingly rough and ready in debate, yet Kok had a fine-spun soul, a fine sense of humor, aesthetic sense. He loved music, poetry, prose, drama; and as an avocation he loved to take pictures of beautiful nature: trees, flowers, birds, streams and mountains. The family must have at least a thousand slides depicting the beauties and glory of God's wonderful creation. These should be used to share this beauty and wonder God displayed in nature.

Kok's life's supreme task: to minister the Word of God in all its richness and comfort.
Soli Deo Gloria!

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OUR QUESTION



REV. HARLAN G. VANDEN EINDE

All questions for this department are to be sent directly to:

Rev. Harlan G. Vanden Einde
1000 Hancock, S.E.
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49507

This department is *for everyone*. No signatures are required and no names will be published. Your questions will be gladly received and answered as promptly as possible.

Rev. VandenEinde is pastor of the Oakdale Park Christian Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Question — From a Michigan reader: "On the one hand the Bible states repeatedly and unmistakably that God will bring into judgment every act with every secret sin — of every one of us — and at the same time, also repeatedly and unmistakably, there are promises, many of them, that God will cast all our sins in the sea of everlasting forgetfulness, and will remember them no more. It must be one or the other. I cannot enjoy true peace of soul until God will let me forget the first and hold to the other."

Answer — I appreciate the question, because this is a difficulty with which many people wrestle. God's justice in judgment and God's love in forgiveness seem to be such opposites in our minds, that we cannot understand how they both can be true at the same time. That leads us to a conclusion such as you have made above, "It must be one or the other." But such a choice we need not make.

I assume your question is based on such Scripture passages as II Corinthians 5:10 "For we must all be made manifest before the judgment-seat of Christ; that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he hath done, whether it be good or bad;" and Hebrews 8:12 "For I will be merciful to their iniquities, and their sins will I remember no more." There are other verses of Scripture to which we could point, but these serve to illustrate the contrast to which you point in your question.

It is true that we will "all be made manifest before the judgment-seat of Christ." Philip E. Hughes, in his commentary on II Corinthians, says

this means that we shall "be laid bare, stripped of every outward facade of respectability, and openly revealed in the full and true reality of one's character. All our hypocrisies and concealments, all our secret, intimate sins of thought and deed, will be open to the scrutiny of Christ — a clear indication, incidentally, of the absolute Deity of the Redeemer, for it is only the divine gaze which penetrates to the very essence of our personality: 'man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart' (I Sam. 16:7)."

Such a judgment will serve to vindicate the holiness and impartiality of God, and determine the nature of our reward. Its purpose is not penal, but retributive, disclosing not only what has been worthless in our life, but also what has been good and valuable. It will be an assessment of worth, with rewards given for faithfulness and the withholding of rewards for those undeserving. When the Christian stands before Christ's judgment-seat, it will not be for the ultimate sentence of salvation or damnation, but for the determining of rewards, which will vary in proportion to the faithfulness and diligence of each individual (cf. Luke 19:16ff).

But how does that square with those Bible passages that speak of God as remembering our sins no more? If we are going to be made manifest before the judgment-seat of Christ, and "laid bare," as it were, then what does it mean to say that God remembers them no more?

The word "remember," like all other words, is a human word. It is a word that is connected with time, and only has meaning because we are creatures of time who live with the possibility of "forgetting." In that sense, it cannot apply to God, for He is eternal, not subject to the same laws of time as we are. So too with the word "forget." Can God "forget" since He is eternal?

The message which the Bible seeks to convey to us, therefore, with the use of these words "remembers not" or "forgets" as applied to God's attitude towards our sin, is that He doesn't "remember" them in terms of condemnation. He doesn't continue to "hold them against us" in terms of guilt. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:1). Of course not! Christ Jesus has paid for the guilt of our sin, and we do not stand before His seat of judgment to determine whether or not the price paid by Christ was sufficient to perfectly justify us. But we stand there as those who have been redeemed, for an assessment of our worth so that our rewards may be determined.

So, true peace of soul as far as your salvation for Jesus' sake is concerned? Yes, you can have that with absoluteness as a child of God! But let the knowledge of the fact that we shall be manifest before the judgment-seat of Christ be for us an incentive for grateful Christian living. Surely, ours is a high calling, as those who are no longer under condemnation, to "present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, well-pleasing unto God" (Rom. 12:1). ●

LESSONS FROM I JOHN



REV. HENRY VANDER KAM

Lessons 3 and 4 on I John by Rev. Henry VanderKam, pastor of the Grace Christian Reformed Church of Kalamazoo, Michigan are in this issue.

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LESSON 3

I John 2:1-6

CHRIST — THE PROPITIATION FOR OUR SINS

The atonement brought by Jesus Christ is the heart of the gospel. In fact, the person and work of Christ is the theme of the whole word of God. "These are written, that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye may have life in his name" (John 20:31).

Terms of endearment — John is now applying the things which he has written in the first chapter to the lives of the members of the churches to whom he is writing. He speaks to them in terms of endearment. They are his little children. He did not do the original work in the district in which his readers find themselves, but he has lived there for a long time.

These people have become very dear to John. He is able to call them his little children, even though he will address fathers among them, be-

cause he is a very old man. He speaks as a pastor and not as a hireling. There is a bond between a true pastor and the people of God which is difficult to define. Listen to the way in which Paul speaks to the various churches. John, this Apostle of love, loves these people as his own children.

John's purpose — He now states the purpose of his writing: that ye may not sin. He does not mean a *living* in sin, to which he had referred in the former chapter, but a *falling* into sin. This is always possible. John wants to prevent this if at all possible.

The readers have indeed broken with a life of sin, but the temptations without and the weakness within can cause a believer to stumble at any moment. In fact, if we say that we have no sin we deceive ourselves. However, the believer wishes to avoid sin and the Apostle seeks to instruct him accordingly.

Christ — Advocate and Propitiation — If we do fall into sin, and that can happen in the life of everyone, we must not despair. We have an Advocate with the Father. The same name is here given to the Christ as this same author has given to the Holy Spirit in the chapters 14 and 16 of his gospel. There the term is usually translated "Comforter." By this term John means one who is called in to give help in a specific need. Christ has ascended and has sent this Comforter to stay with His people. He Himself has gone in to the presence of God to be the Advocate for His people before God. He is pleading their "case" before the throne of justice. He is the righteous. He has impeccable credentials.

What a glorious truth! Christ is pleading for us before the throne of God and the Spirit of God is working within us! Throughout this epistle John speaks of the firm foundation which has been laid for our faith. Assurance of faith is given His people based upon the proper understanding of the truth God has revealed to us. An Advocate within and an Advocate above! His people can't lose!

"And he is the propitiation for our sins" — not only an Advocate, but also the One who appeases the justice of God. Many names are given our Savior in the Bible, but no name — nor all of them together — is able to explain fully who He is or what He does. As an Advocate before the throne of God Christ does not plead our innocence. Then He would not be righteous. No, He covers the sins His people have committed with His blood. So He appeases the wrath of God against sin. He Himself is the propitiation. He is the altar, the sacrifice upon the altar, and the Highpriest who officiates at the altar! God's justice demands full payment for any sin committed, and He makes the complete payment. This Advocate presents the full payment of the sinner's debt. Naturally, He wins the "case."

For the whole world — This propitiation which Christ brings is not only for those to whom the Apostle is writing but it is for the sins of the whole world. Anyone who might think that the writer is here teaching forgiveness for all men everywhere has the weight of all the Scriptures against him. In the previous chapter John has emphasized the need

of confession in order to obtain forgiveness (1:9). Rather, the author means men of all nations and languages.

John also goes even farther than this. He speaks of the world as an organism. Sin has ruined the original organic nature of the world. Christ has come to establish the organism of His church in this world. That church is the true "world." The members of His church are bound together as His body. The unbelieving world is no body — it is an aggregate.

Knowing God — John's writings do not display the same form of logic as the epistles of Paul. Paul's writings are closely reasoned. John sees things intuitively and the one thought does not always seem to follow the other logically. So it is in verse three. He has been speaking of the work of Christ as our Advocate and His propitiation for the sin of man. Now suddenly he is speaking of knowing God! However, we must remember that he is writing about our fellowship with God. This is made possible by the atoning work of Christ. Now the believer will be able to know his God. God is a stranger to the unbeliever. God has been revealed to the believer in His word and in the person of Jesus Christ.

Do the readers still wonder whether they really know Him? If they keep His commandments they will have the evidence that they really know God. Knowing Him does not mean to have an acquaintance with Him or to be able to distinguish Him from others. It means to have a life-relationship with Him! Having that kind of relationship to Him, they have fellowship with Him. Those who are so related to Him will hate sin and have a delight in keeping His commandments. John uses this form of argumentation time and again. From the fruits he argues the truth of the proper relationship to God. From the fruit he argues to the "tree."

There will be many who claim that they know God with that kind of knowledge of which the Apostle has been speaking. Yet, they do not keep His commandments. Who will be able to sit in judgment on their profession? Anyone can. If the life does not correspond to the profession, they are living a lie. The truth is not in such people. This is emphasized to convince the believers that they indeed have fellowship with God and know Him if they keep His commandments. Keeping His commandments is proof positive that they stand in living relation to the true God. They may not doubt it. Assurance of faith is so necessary for a healthy spiritual life.

Keeping God's word — In the next verse John no longer speaks of keeping the *commandments* of God, but now speaks of keeping His *word*. Some believe that the two terms mean the same thing. I do not believe that the writer uses terms so carelessly. By the commandments he meant more than the ten commandments. By the *word* he means the whole revelation the readers have received. This is the same author who will later caution the church not to add to or detract from the word (Rev. 22:18-19). Men must listen closely to every word which has proceeded out of His

mouth. God does not speak idle words. This word must be *kept*. It is to be believed and applied. They live out of it.

Those who keep His commandments know their God; those who keep His word, "in them verily hath the love of God been perfected." There is, therefore, progress in the thoughts John here reveals. By this love of God some have understood the love which He has toward men while others think that it refers to the believer's love to God. The Apostle does not tell us which one of the two he has in mind. However, where he makes no distinction it is safe to assume that he means the love which God has to His people. This is the love which gives rise to the love which they have to their God. God loved us first. This love of God produces such a change in the hearts and lives of believers that their whole being is turned to Him. They all desire this love of God to them. What a change has been wrought! They were enemies; they were alienated from God; they were also alienated from their fellow men. The propitiation of Christ has brought this change about. They are now the objects of His love. If God loves them and they love their God the whole life of the individual has been turned around. In them is this love perfected, i.e., it has come to full development. The only way they will become the recipients of this love of God is by the total acceptance of His word.

How to know we are in God — When this love of God has been revealed in the lives of believers they know that they are in Him. This is again a step farther than to know Him. How often Paul speaks of being *in Christ*. John now uses this same terminology. When the word of God is truly believed so that it directs all of life and they have tasted the full love of God operative within them, then we know that we are in Him. It is union with God!

Those who say that they abide in Him, i.e., remain in Him, not only for the moment, but constantly, must show it in their lives. The confession of the lips is not enough. They should walk, conduct themselves, as Jesus Christ did while He was here on earth. They should be imitators of Christ. He has indeed given Himself as a propitiation for our sins and He has also given us an example of the kind of life which is well-pleasing to God. He who claims to abide "in Him" should find it very natural to live as Christ lived. Confession and life must be in agreement.

The salvation purchased by Jesus Christ determines both our future and our present life. It must become evident in the present life that the future is safe. Seeing this evidence in the present will then give assurance concerning the future.

Questions for discussion:

1. Is the profession of a pastor different from all other professions? In which ways? Why?
2. The Spirit of God was sent to be our Comforter, our Helper, our Advocate, our Paraclete. Does this knowledge make Pentecost more meaningful to you? How does Christ plead our 'case' as Advocate?

3. How is Christ's propitiation for the whole world? Does this give a different view of the church than that which is usually found?
4. What does it mean "to keep His word"? Do we know the word well enough to keep it?
5. How can we be imitators of Christ?

LESSON 4

I John 2:7-11

THE COMMAND TO LOVE

In these verses the Apostle deals with the proper relationship among those who confess the same faith. Even the unbeliever expects the members of the church of Christ to love one another. It is a relationship which is largely foreign to unbelief, but it does expect it of the church member.

John deals with the love which members of the church have toward each other. He is here not speaking of the love which is even to be shown to enemies. He speaks in the usual terminology of Scripture, i.e., he *commands* love. This love is not dependent on a certain favorable feeling — it is commanded.

Here the ways of the Bible and of the world part company. The world does not believe men can love at command. It believes that love is an unexplainable attraction which may exist between two people. If, unexplainably this love ceases, the relationship is broken. The Bible comes with the command: Husbands love your wives! Love does not only include the feelings of men but includes the thinking and willing as well. John, following the pattern of Scripture, now also speaks concerning the command to love.

John addresses his readers by the term: Beloved. They are the beloved of God. They are also the beloved of this Apostle. They are not addressed as his friends and not even as his brothers and sisters. He is going to instruct them in the love which they are to show toward one another and are therefore immediately reminded of the fact that they themselves are beloved!

Not a new commandment — John begins by telling them that he is not giving them a new commandment when he demands that they love one another. In a certain sense it is not even a commandment because it is so natural. He is not coming with something new to add to that which they already have. He is simply reiterating that which had been given them long ago. It may, therefore, be called an old commandment. You had that commandment given you since the time you believed. That was the word which you heard which was instrumental in your conversion. It is even older than that, of course. It is as old as the revelation of God, but, for those who will read this epistle it began at the time they became acquainted with the word. Even so, it is an old commandment for them because they have been believers for some time.

Old but also new — In verse seven the Apostle tells us that he is not writing a new commandment but one that is very old. However, in verse eight he says that he is indeed writing a new commandment

to the church. Is he contradicting himself? Is he writing an eleventh commandment to the church?

No, John is not writing a new commandment which is essentially different from the old commandment of which he spoke earlier. How then can it be called new? It is old because it was there from the beginning, a beginning which goes back to God's first revelation to man. It is new because new light has been shed on it by the coming of Jesus Christ into the world. The gospel made the old commandment plain. By demonstration it revealed the essence of that love. God gave His Son and sent Him to bear our nature. Christ revealed that love in His words and works. He revealed that love especially in giving Himself as a sacrifice for our sins. Now we see the glorious content of that love and its full meaning. That old commandment had often been misinterpreted. Now there is no reason for misinterpretation. Therefore it is new. Our love is to be patterned after the love of Christ. It must be sacrificial.

That which is true of Him must also be true of the believer. There is to be a similarity even though there is the great difference between Creator and creature. Yet, they must mirror the works of God. There will be the difference in degree; but, in principle, the love He shows must be shown by His people. They are to believe in God and in His Son, but they must also learn to think the thoughts of God after Him and must become imitators of Jesus Christ! That is the meaning of both the old and new commandment. Christ Himself spoke in the same vein when He said: "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; even as I have loved you, that ye also love one another" (John 13:34).

In the light — It is one thing to issue a command but it is quite another to keep it or to be able to keep it. John also addresses himself to that problem. "The darkness is passing away," that is, those who walk in darkness and do not display the commanded love, fail. No one can keep on walking in darkness! It will ruin him. Besides, "the true light already shineth." The gospel has come and thereby the light has been revealed. No one has excuse for walking in darkness. The light is risen with the coming of Christ and that is also the light of love. How can anyone who has tasted of the great love of God, demonstrated in the coming of Christ, now walk in darkness. The *true* light is shining. It is the light which is effective.

To claim that one is in the light does not suffice. There are many such people. In fact, who would admit that he is in darkness? The light is claimed by virtually all men. Those who claim that they are in the light claim that they are, therefore, able to see. They are able, in their own minds, to see the proper relationships.

How can one be sure whether this claim of light is true? If he hates his brother, says John, he is in the darkness despite his claims to the contrary. He does not speak of hating the neighbor or some other person, but, his *brother*. That brother is in the light. He is the believer. If he hates this brother he is in darkness till this moment. He

has no fellowship with the God Who is light and the only Source of light for man. He has not received the grace of God in his own heart. He has no peace with God nor forgiveness. He has not tasted of the salvation through the blood of Christ. He has placed himself where sin reigns. The term 'darkness' says it all. There is no neutrality. Either one is in the light — the full light — or he is in darkness. There is nothing in-between!

He who loves his brother is in the light, walks in the light, and remains in the light. He is at home in the light. That is the atmosphere in which he can live. This is the person who keeps the commandment of God. He has fellowship with his God and that fellowship influences his every relationship.

No occasion of stumbling — There is no occasion of stumbling in such a person. The word which the Apostle uses here (translated: stumbling) is used various times in the New Testament. The gospel is called a "stumbling block" to some, etc. It means: a snare or a trap, or the stick which triggers a trap. Thus, persons or their actions may be stumbling blocks to others. Here, however, the Apostle uses the term in a somewhat different way. He is not speaking of one being a stumbling block to another, but tells us that a person who walks in the light does not have the "occasion of stumbling" within himself! He does not carry around within himself such things as would lead him to fall. He *abideth* in the light. Those who are in the light need not fear that one moment they will be in the light and the next in darkness. The perseverance of the saints is taught throughout Scripture. By contrast, the one who is in darkness works his own undoing.

Notice that there are only two kinds of people which the Apostle describes: those in the light and those in the darkness; those who love their brother and those who hate their brother. Men have often sought to soften these distinctions, but the Scriptures do not do this. One who does not love — hates!

A sharp distinction — This sharp distinction is shown very clearly in verse eleven. Those who hate their brother, while claiming to be in the light, are in darkness. They practice self-deception. Let them, however, not deceive others. By their fruits they are clearly known. If they were in the light they would do the works which belong to the light. Seeing that they do the works of darkness (by hating the brother) they show that they are the children of darkness.

Such a person also walks in the dark. Everything that he is or does is in the darkness. This darkness has the whole life in its grip. While he walks in darkness he, of course, does not know where he is going. There is no clear direction nor is he able to see the danger of the next step. The darkness has blinded his eyes. When the heart and mind and eye are in the darkness, the foot will not be in the light!

What a contrast there is between the true believer and the unbeliever! The Apostle draws sharp lines! There is no middle ground. The

darkness of which he speaks in this section permeates the whole life. By nature . . . prone to hate God and my neighbor. The light also influences the whole life and illumines within and without. The regenerated heart is the one transformed from darkness to light.

How can we judge the heart? No man can do that. But, it becomes so evident whether a person speaks the truth or comes with false claims. Does he love or does he hate his brother?

Not only is the true test of a person's veracity given here, but John is hereby giving assurance of faith to the true people of God. If they indeed love their brethren they may not wonder whether or not they have fellowship with the God of light. He will return to this subject later.

Questions for discussion:

1. Can we love at command? What would you say to a person who claims that his love for his marriage partner has ceased?
2. Does the Apostle bring forth things old and new? Explain.
3. Why do people often contrast the law and love? Isn't the law also summarized in one word: love? Do you think the neglect of the reading of the law during worship services is in keeping with the outcry of the Psalmist: Oh how love I Thy law?
4. Of what comfort is the teaching of the Perseverance of the Saints?
5. Does the Bible ever teach anything about a "lesser love"?

Attention!

Series on I John

by REV. HENRY VANDER KAM

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WHAT WE

Believe

(7)

REV. ELCO H. OOSTENDORP



MAN CREATED IN GOD'S IMAGE

This is the seventh in a series of articles on Reformed Doctrine, under the heading, *What We Believe*. The familiar question — and — answer method is being followed. In this article, Rev. Elco H. Oostendorp begins his treatment on "The Doctrine of Man".

What is man that he should be loved and visited by thee?

This question of the psalmist in Psalm 8, as paraphrased in Psalter Hymnal number 13, stanza 4, pinpoints the area of our concern in the second main division, or locus, of theology, the doctrine of man in his relationship to God. This is also called Anthropology. In recent years there has been a great emphasis on the social sciences, psychology, sociology, and anthropology; and we have learned a lot about men and their behavior. But these sciences both as theoretical and practical must work with people as they are. Anthropology as a part of theology is based upon what the Bible tells us about mankind, and thus is concerned with what God has revealed about the origin, fall, and destiny of humanity. Although we can learn much from studying man as a part of general revelation, our source in these studies is God's special revelation, the Bible as the Word of God.

How did the human race begin?

The Bible tells us that God created man on the sixth day of the creation week described in Genesis 1. The brief account of the creation of male and female in the image of God found in Genesis 1:26-31 is supplemented in more detail in the second chapter where we are told that God made man, Adam, out of the dust and later formed woman, Eve, from Adam's rib. We accept this record as historical, as descriptive of the beginning of humanity. Adam and Eve were the first parents of all succeeding generations. There have been attempts to interpret the first three, or even the first eleven, chapters of Genesis, as being pre-historical and therefore to be understood as saga or myth. Some would compromise between an evolutionistic and a biblical explanation of man's origin. Although the confessions of our Reformed

Churches were written before modern scientific studies raised a lot of questions along this line we do not believe that their position on the creation of man as described in the Bible needs to be abandoned or compromised.

Why is belief in the biblical account of creation basic to accepting the gospel of salvation in Christ?

Although the Bible makes surprisingly little reference to the creation and fall of mankind, as Dr. Herman Bavinck points out in his article on the fall in *The International Bible Encyclopedia*, it is clearly basic to the history of redemption. Creation established the relationship between God as sovereign and men as his servants and children. This is beautifully expressed in Revelation chapters 4 and 5, where John first sees God as the Creator, and then the Lamb as the Savior who ransomed the people of God by his blood. The basic importance of creation is that mankind is one in Adam, the father of all. So Paul in teaching the Gospel in his letter to the Romans draws a parallel between Adam and Christ (chapter 5:12-21) and in I Corinthians 15:22 he says, "For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive." Contrary to those who would see in such statements a use of rabbinical methods no longer valid for us, we believe that these and other New Testament references indicate that the existence of Adam and Eve as our first parents, special creations of God, is basic to faith in the good news of salvation through Jesus Christ as our last Adam, God's agent in fallen man's new creation.

Was man created in a unique way?

Yes, in both Genesis 1 and 2 the creation of man is set apart from that of the animals and all other beings. The distinctive feature is that God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness" (vs. 26) and in verse 27 we read: "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female he created them." This was followed by the so-called "cultural mandate", the command to have dominion over all of creation, and to subdue it. In verse 26 this dominion is closely connected to the image of God. As made in the image of God, man can truly be said to be the crown of creation.

What is the image of God in which we were created?

Reformed theologians have usually distinguished between the image of God in the broader and narrower sense, or the image as belonging to man's very essence or being, and in a spiritual or moral condition, which was lost when Adam became a sinner. In the former meaning of the term, it refers to the fact that men are persons, spirits, rational and moral and self-conscious. In this sense even fallen men are said to have been made in the image of God, and therefore human life is sacred (Genesis 9:6) and we are forbidden to curse men, "who are made in the likeness of God"

(James 3:9). In distinction from the teaching of those who would make the image of God something that the Creator added to human nature (Roman Catholic view), we believe it is of the very essence of man's being, and in that sense Adam is called the son of God (Luke 4:38). In the narrower sense the image of God is the true knowledge of God, righteousness, and holiness in which man was like God in his moral nature. This is mentioned in Heidelberg Catechism answer 6 and Confession of Faith Article XIV; also Canons of Dort III & IV, Article 1. Source texts for this description are especially Ephesians 4:24, "created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness", and Colossians 3:10, "the new nature, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator". In this sense the image of God is lost, unless restored by the new birth. A comparison I have found helpful is that of a light bulb, which may be called an image of the sun as a source of light. A burned out, dead bulb is still a light bulb, but has lost its most important similarity to the sun in that it doesn't shine. So men are still men, even though dead in sins and trespasses (Eph. 2:1), but the light that is in them has become darkness (cf. Canons of Dort III & IV, Art. 4).

Do we believe in dichotomy or trichotomy in our view of man's nature?

These terms refer to the elements of human nature. Dichotomy is the view that man consists of two parts, body and soul or spirit; trichotomy understands soul and spirit to be two separate and distinct entities of man. Genesis 2:7 tells us that God formed man out of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and man became a living being (soul). In a short article such as this we cannot adduce proof for the fact that soul and spirit are not distinct "parts" of man, but two aspects of his spiritual being that continues to exist after death (cf. Heid. Cat. Answer 57). In recent years there has been reaction against speaking of man as consisting of two parts, and the emphasis is on the unity of human nature. We do need to be on guard against a pagan view of the body as in itself inferior and even sinful, a prison of the soul. The fact that Scripture teaches the resurrection of the body as the great hope of the Christian refutes such a view. When Paul refers to the "flesh" as being evil (e.g., Romans 8:7, 8) he does not mean the body, but fallen human nature. We are to render our bodies as sacrifices to God (Romans 12:1), and the apostle prays for the keeping of body as well as soul and spirit until the coming of Jesus Christ (I Thess. 5:23). Our bodies also reflect the image of God, and therefore by saving grace they become temples of the Holy Spirit who dwells in us (I Cor. 6:19, 20). ●

Reformed Women Speak



“Yet...”

MISS JOHANNA TIMMER

Miss Johanna Timmer, departmental editor of *Reformed Women Speak* writes: “Let us especially remember the young people in Communist lands who are willing to suffer persecution for the sake of the Lord Jesus Christ.” Anyone wishing to write for *Reformed Women Speak* may contact:

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In Psalm 74 Asaph complains bitterly about the conditions of his day because of “the devastation of the land by the enemy.” We can sympathize so well with Asaph because of current conditions in government, in economics, in social life, in the homes, in the schools, in the churches. We are troubled on every side. More and more matters disturb us. They make us sick at heart. Let me mention just a few at random:

Why does President Carter favor giving up our control of the Panama Canal? Why does President Carter favor supporting “a military build up of a nation [Jamaica] committed to Marxist principles and the destruction of freedom and democracy”? Why has tax money been used to finance abortions? Why do we have détente with Russia? Why are we eating “ice cream” with Cuba? Why does President Carter not apply his belief in human rights to cover those who should have the right not to belong to a union? Why does our government frown upon Chile that has rid itself of Communist control?

Why is there so much permissiveness in our circles under the cloak of Christian liberty and the cultural mandate? Why do covenant youth take to drugs, to sex, to rock music, to alcohol, to the theater, to the dance, etc., etc. — thus subjecting their “hearts of quivering flesh” to great evils? Why have sports taken over in many homes on Sunday afternoons either by people watching it on TV or indulging in it themselves? Why do so many women work outside the home whose greatest responsibility is in the home? “Fewer and fewer parents are doing their job in caring for children” (*The Conservative Digest*, August 1977). In that same article I read that one sixth of all children in

our country are living in single-parent families; 50% of women with school-aged children are now employed; one third of those with children under 6 are employed; and one third of those with children under 3. In the *Missionary Monthly* I just read this in one of the excellent articles of Betty De Witt: “. . . there seems to be a growing attitude even among Christian women that her primary concern is the development of her personal desires. Get the children out of the house as quickly as possible so that we may have freedom to pursue our own interests. Sometimes I am afraid we use many excuses to hide our real motives; we need the money, my child needs the companionship of other children of his own age, I am a better mother if I am away from my home at least part of the time. The highly important task of creating a Christian home has fallen into disrepute and is regarded as drudgery, as being uncreative, dull and unchallenging. There are so many things that draw us from our homes that they can hardly be called homes any longer. Since we do not dare to stand against these forces lest we be considered odd, we succumb” (June-July 1977, p. 14).

Since I started typing the above quotation I came across a statement by Senator O. Hatch of Utah in *Battle Line* put out by The American Conservative Union: “Laws permitting abortion, the over-emphasis on protecting the rights of special interest groups to the exclusion of others, and the over-emphasis on taking women out of the home — have all contributed to the breakdown of the family” (June-July 1977, p. 17). Why are so many mothers more interested in affording “things” than in rearing children? Why do so many men cast adulterous eyes on women with whom they work? Why are divorces increasing in our church circles?

Why are so many schools lacking in sound education and in discipline? Why is there so much vandalism in schools and communities? Why is there so little respect for parents and teachers? Why must sex education take such a raw turn in some schools, as if they want to ruin the morals of a child before it leaves school? Why has progressive creationism (theistic evolution) taken over in many Christian schools as the accepted view?

Why are some ministers in our circles giving their parishioners husks instead of bread? I recently attended a CRC service where liberals would have felt very much at home, but where solid conservatives feel they come away from church empty, without having had their souls fed. Why? Why? What is the matter with the elders of such a church? What is the matter with the church visitors? What is the matter with the Classis? Why is catechism preaching disobediently neglected by some ministers? How can a man be admitted to the ministry of the CRC if he denies some of the teachings of the Bible? Why must our Synod appoint committee after committee to weigh the matter of women preachers and of the Lodge when the Bible seems clear on both? Why are so many members of so many of our churches absent from the evening services?

Yes, we are troubled on every side. I think my blood pressure rose markedly and my heart sank when today I read the report of the Board of Trustees of Calvin College and Seminary in *The Banner* concerning social dancing. Are we going to have social dancing at Calvin with a possible future approval by faculty and Board? If so, then let not the church feel it has the right to ask me for financial support. Now that theatricals have taken safe hold, dancing is coming to the fore. This, if permitted will lead, I am sure, to sexual promiscuity. Doesn't this make one think that Calvin should no longer be the responsibility of the Christian Reformed denomination?

Asaph's complaints were many. A good number of us have many complaints too. We with Asaph can nevertheless unburden our hearts to the Lord and with him triumphantly exclaim:

"Yet God is my King of old,
Working salvation in the midst of the earth."
(Ps. 74:12)

Yes, we too can say after listing complaint upon complaint (and my list is far from complete): "Yet God is my king of old, working salvation in the midst of the earth." In spite of the wickedness in human society, and the faithfulnesses among God's people, we know that God is King, that Christ is the Head of the Church. Jesus Christ is riding on to victory in spite of all contrary winds. All authority is His in heaven and on earth. There is abundant proof of the King working salvation in the midst of the earth. Let us now list some of them at random to hearten us:

We can rejoice that there are some God-fearing men in our government locally, state-wise, and nationally. They pray for direction and desire to promote sound government. There are organizations that are working hard to promote good legislation, men who oppose abortion, union control of government, giving up the Panama Canal, pornography, increased centralization, withdrawing armed forces from Korea, etc. Among these organizations are: The Young Americans for Freedom, The American Security Council, The American Conservative Union, The National Right to Work Legal Defense Foundation Inc., The Committee for Free China, Americans against Union Control of Government, The American Chilean Council, etc. All these organizations are promoting causes that are promotive of the welfare of church and state.

The Gospel is speeding its way to the ends of the earth. The scope of outreach of the Back-to-Hour alone is phenomenal. The speed with which the Bible, or portions of it, is translated into languages and dialects is encouraging. Christian book stores are being established all over the world. Accounts of this by the World Literature Crusade are especially fascinating. Just imagine! A Missionary Aviation Fellowship pilot takes off every 5 minutes of every day, day and night, to wing missionaries to their fields, patients to the hospital, medicine to the sick, etc. The Gallup Poll sees the beginning of a great revival in our land. God grant it! SWIM teams go hither and yon with

the Gospel. Christian schools are multiplying. Gospel crusades are well attended. The Mexico Summer Training Session is attracting much attention from young Christians from Canada and the U.S.A. Their program of activity and their way of life in Mexico reflect real dedication to the furtherance of the Gospel. The demand for Bibles with whole schools using them as textbooks is amazing. There is also a heavy demand for Bible correspondence courses and for Christian books.

Yes, there are young people that take a stand against the evils of the day. There are young people that go on SWIM. Others participate in the Mexico summer Training Session. Again others offer themselves for service in the CRWR program. More and more heed the call to full-time home and foreign missions. Many students do volunteer work in hospitals, among the handicapped and the underprivileged. Then there is all the church work they do. Let us especially remember the young people in communist lands who are willing to suffer persecution for the sake of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Salvation is coming to hundreds of people in the world today. God is bringing in His own from all over. Don't they say that 20,000 are saved every week in Africa alone? There is encouraging response to the Gospel as proclaimed on the Back-to-God Hour in English, Arabic, Chinese, French, Indonesian, Japanese, Spanish, Portuguese.

I recently met a group of young people at the Kennedy Airport in New York who were flying to Europe to witness to the Gospel, young people, full of zeal, eager to launch forth.

Through devious ways God is working salvation in the midst of the earth. God is fulfilling His purposes in spite of Satan's efforts to undo them. God's counsel shall stand, and He will do all His good pleasure.

I believe many of God's dear children feel as I do, being troubled on every side. May we nevertheless also all be able to say with Asaph:

"Yet God is my King of old,
Working salvation in the midst of the earth." ●



Meditation

EDUCATION

THAT IS

Christian

REV. GARRETT H. STOUTMEYER



And all thy children shall be taught of
Jehovah; and great shall be the peace of thy
children.

— Isaiah 54:13

Rev. Garrett H. Stoutmeyer is pastor of the Faith Christian Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan.

September brings the days that are commonly known as "back-to-school days." Travel and summer vacations have ended for most families and schoolwork and homework will take their demanding and dominant place. Public and private, parochial and parentally-controlled schools will open their doors. In the large majority of schools students will again be presented with a wholesale range of ideas, cafeteria style, and all under the guise of freedom. Education has not been immune to society's problem, namely, it is glutted with its own secularism.

However, as far back as 1956 an article appeared in *The Banner* which contained the solemn warning that we cannot assume that we have Christian education merely because we have Christian schools. That warning of over 20 years ago may have seemed premature at the time and gone largely, if not totally, unheeded. Especially so when the respected National Union of Christian Schools reprints without comment the text of an address given at the close of the 1976 NUCS-ACSA Convention last August, 1976. The speaker expressed the opinion that "there are a lot of people in our churches for whom new is bad, change is automatically suspect, and the old is always better." I undoubtedly belong to that large "lot of people in our churches", especially so when it is declared that taking a new look at Scripture we must admit that "I was wrong" particularly in the two areas of study mentioned, namely, women in the church and creation, etc. A careful reading of "Our Commitment" in the March, 1977 *Christian Home and School* magazine is urged upon all readers of THE OUTLOOK.

Therefore, as school doors open again, and particularly the doors of our Covenantal schools, we turn to the Word of God for its wisdom and direction. Isaiah, the prophet 700 years before Christ, looking specifically to the members of the Covenant, and knowing that the "fear of the Lord

is the beginning of all wisdom", bids them have their children "taught of the Lord." For each of us, whether parents or grandparents or the community of the faithful, that spells does it not a very SPECIAL PRIVILEGE? Christian education conceived as a "Communion of the saints" experience in the establishment, maintenance, and furtherance prayerfully and financially, becomes a privilege of working harmoniously together as Covenant homes, schools, and churches, etc. For we are working in the training of our children not as isolated family units but as a community of believers in the training of HIS children! In reality the boys and the girls growing up among us really do NOT belong to us, do they? God help us that we never get beyond that viewpoint of our children which was heeded by Jacob on that day when he met his estranged brother. Esau asked Jacob, "Whose are the children with thee? And Jacob answered, these are the children whom God has given your servant." In short, they are God-given trusts held by us for a very brief time, one day to be returned to Him, and woe be to us if we misuse our sacred privilege.

For that privilege many will have to sacrifice. Financially, for some there will be no sacrifice but for the majority it may mean driving the already old car an additional year or more. For others it may mean wearing last year's suit, dress, coat, etc. For still others it may mean no trips or expensive vacations and for others mother's working. Are we willing to make the sacrifices necessary? When we may be tempted to complain that the sacrifice is greater than the privilege, and the burden too heavy to be borne, may the Lord God remind us that:

- the Christian school is the ONLY school (particularly in the U.S.A.) that can teach the "fear of God" to all students without fear of breaking the law of the land;
- the only school that can teach "Creationism" versus the evolutionary hypothesis so rampant in our day;
- the only school that can teach the providence of God versus the chance philosophy of our day;
- the only school that can teach Christ at Christmas, gratitude at Thanksgiving, Christ during Lent and Easter instead of bunnies and colored eggs, etc;
- the only school that can teach that $2+2=4$ because we live in a world of perfect order and mathematical certainty because God created it so!

To the privilege a GREAT PROMISE is appended: "And great shall be the peace of thy children." What a promise! It needs no explanation, does it? But that promise is worth everything because the sovereignty of our faithful Covenant God stands eternally behind it.

As another school year begins, may the Lord God bless every school, parent, student, and congregation as we work harmoniously together in the education of His children. ●

THE CHURCH and EVOLUTION



JOHN KANIS

John Kanis is a graduate of Pella (Iowa) Christian High School. He is now a senior pre-medical student at Dordt College in Sioux Center, Iowa. This article was a prize-winning contribution in the 1975 essay contest open to the young people of the First Christian Reformed Church of Pella. In February, '77 THE OUTLOOK published John's prize-winning contribution submitted in the contest of '76 on "Double Predestination — Election and Reprobation." Generous monetary awards from a member of the First Pella CRC encourages participation by the young people. In view of today's widespread propagation and acceptance of the theory of evolution. Also this article is relevant for our time and should be read with interest and profit. Parents will also do well to encourage their children to read and give careful consideration to it.

Science and religion should fit together for the Christian. The revelation of God's Word and that of God's world must agree.

It seems that belief in the Bible and literal creation did serve a useful and necessary purpose at a particular age in the history of Western civilization. However to hold such beliefs nowadays is often deemed anti-intellectual and harmful if not somewhat backward. This raises some important questions. Questions such as: What is our Church's CRC stand on creation? Is the creation record literal or not? Does creation allow any room for any kind of evolutionism? Can the findings of science and the creation account be harmonized? All these questions point to one key issue. The issue is creation versus evolution. The Christian solution to the issue can be found by delving into a yet deeper question: What does the Bible say?

Creation — What is creation? "Creation may be defined as that act of the almighty will of God whereby He, through His Word and by His Spirit, gave to the entire universe and to all the individual creatures of that universe, (things as they eternally exist in God's eternal thoughts, in His counsel) existence in distinction from Himself and His own

Being."¹ When God created "the heavens, the earth and all that in them is" (Ex. 20:11) He did so without any preexistent materials whatsoever. Theologians have called this *creatio ex nihilo* (creation out of nothing).

The Church's Stand — What has been the Church's CRC stand on creation in the past? "We believe that the Father by the Word, that is by His Son has created of nothing the heavens, the earth and all creatures, when it seemed good unto Him, giving unto every creature its being, shape, form, and several offices to serve its Creator; that He also still upholds and governs them by His eternal providence and infinite power for the service of mankind, to the end that man may serve his God."¹³

Our Church stand comes of course directly from the Bible. In the familiar first chapter of John we read, "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made" (John 1:1-3).

The Church has stated its belief in God as the Creator of heaven and earth in both the Nicene and Apostles' Creed. This belief is also dealt with in the Heidelberg Catechism (Question and Answer 26). "Q. What do you believe when you say: I believe in God the Father, Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth? A. That the eternal Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who of nothing made heaven and earth with all that is in them, who likewise upholds and governs the same by His eternal counsel and providence. . ."¹³

In the *Acts of Synod of 1951* a short and concise decision is recorded as adopted. The Church said Genesis 1 and 2 are historical and they define God's divine act of creation adequately even if not fully. It also proclaimed that the Church rejected all evolutionary teaching which rules God out entirely, makes Him dependent upon a process or limits His activity. In the *Acts of Synod of 1959* a report is made on "General Principles in Connection with Creation and Evolution." The committee lightly reviewed some principles of 1949 and came up with a report similar to that of 1951. The report repudiated three types of evolution. The first being the classical materialistic evolution, the second being an evolution which conceives of God as dependent on a process of so called creative evolution, and a third concept of evolution which postulates that God only incidentally intervenes in the course of evolution.

In 1966 a request was made at Synod for action regarding study matter on the problem of origins. A committee was appointed and it gave Synod advice as to the selection of another committee in 1967. Then in 1967 it was recommended that Synod withhold action and thereby not implement the decision of Synod of 1966. In 1968 the withholding action was not to be reversed.

It seems to me that a simple general statement was made in 1949 and somewhat restated in 1951. Since then Synod has been reluctant to delve further into the problem or make any additional

statements because of the complexity and magnitude of the problem.

Evolution — Evolution stands diametrically over against the truth of creation. Evolution is the view, the theory, that maintains first of all that the world somehow began of itself. Secondly, it holds that from this unexplained “beginning” the whole universe evolved, developed gradually. This development allegedly took place first of all as far as the inorganic, non-living, creature is concerned. It evolved and developed from the less refined and less definite to the more refined and more definite. Then somehow the principle of life came into being and all the forms of living creatures came from that one cell. They developed from the lower to the higher forms and from the simpler to the more complex. Thirdly, evolutionism holds that this all developed over a period of billions of years until the world and the human race as we know it came into existence.

Evolutionists have tried to explain the evolving of life (both plants and animals) with a number of different hypotheses.

1. One of the first of these hypotheses was that of Lamarck. Lamarck believed that environmental influences were the chief causes of evolutionary change. According to him when an animal's environment changes, it needs to change and this leads to special demands on certain organs. Conversely, an organ or organs no longer used would degenerate and atrophy. For example, Lamarck believed the giraffe used to be a short-necked animal, but when its environment changed so that the only food it could find was on trees, the giraffe adapted. It used its neck so much that it eventually became longer. Lamarck postulated that such changed characteristics could be transmitted to offspring. Lamarck's theory then was based on the idea of use and disuse and inheritance of acquired traits.

The greatest deficiency in the Lamarckian theory was the assumption of the hereditary transmission of acquired traits. When put to the test the Lamarckian theory did not stand up. A German worker, Weismann, tried cutting tails off mice for many successive generations. At the end of the experiment the last generation grew tails as long as the mice of the first generation. Many workers have devised experiments to test the hypothesis since Weismann's time but the result was always the same. Actually experiments were not necessary. The Chinese bound the feet of their women for many generations, yet this has not resulted in any modification of the feet of present day Chinese women. The Israelites circumcised their men for thousands of years but it did not result in any tendency toward reduction of the prepuce in their group. Now Lamarck's theory has been abandoned by all modern biologists.

2. Charles Darwin was the originator of the theory of natural selection. Darwin made two deductions. a. Because the great reproductive potential of different organisms is not realized in nature — that is because all the individuals that are produced do not survive — there must be a struggle

for existence. b. In the struggle for existence, those individuals that have favorable variation will survive in proportionately greater numbers and therefore produce a greater proportion of the next generation.

This is natural selection of “survival of the fittest.” Natural selection results in the survival of those forms that are best integrated with all of the factors of the environment in which they live.

Darwin's theory had one *great* weakness: it did not explain how variations could be transmitted. According to his hypothesis the parts of the body give off tiny particles (which he called pangenes) into the body fluids and these collected in the eggs and sperms. Later when the fertilized egg undergoes development, according to the concept, the pangenes present are responsible for the particular features of the new individual. The hypothesis has since been proven untenable by biologists.

3. The modern theory of evolution is called Neo-Darwinianism. It is a combination of mutations and natural selection. Modern evolutionists believe that mutations are the raw materials of evolution. These changes in genes and chromosome configurations, together with the recombinations that result from sexual reproduction are the only known inheritable changes that occur in organisms. Natural selection does not cause these changes but plays an important role in determining which of them will survive. Evolutionists claim that “when a mutation occurs that is beneficial — that gives some survival advantages to its possessor — it will appear with increasing frequency in subsequent generations. The rate at which the new gene replaces the old one in the population will be determined by a number of factors: whether the new mutation is dominant or recessive; the intensity of selection; the rate of which the mutation occurs in the population; the rate of reverse evolution; and the size of the population.”⁷ Evolutionists admit that most mutations are deleterious in their effects and thus are not of survival value. How can you get good mutations then? Time. Evolutionists believe that anything can happen given enough time.

Ecological Problem — Neo-Darwinians are correct only up to a certain point. First there is an ecological problem. Nature does not work quite like Darwin said. Actually it is the “unsurvival of the unfittest” rather than the “survival of the fittest.” Darwin had really found the “brake” that keeps a species from falling apart, not the “accelerator” that causes a species to get better. Even with this “brake,” human beings have deteriorated terribly since Adam and Eve.

Loss of Adaptive Traits — The fact that so called adaptive traits are lost also makes evolution look false. For example, hemoglobin, which is essential to carry oxygen in the blood, exists in us and in worms of various kinds but not in any of the intermediate species. How could hemoglobin, which is so complex, have evolved once in worms then have been lost in the evolution chain but evolved again in us?

Trait Sets — A whole series of genes that work together are called trait sets. The platypus, for example, with its sonar needs not only a way to make echo location sounds but also a receiving and interpreting device. To have these sets you must have hundreds of thousands of genes working together. How could these genes just evolve to work together? There is definitely an omnipotent Designer behind these wonders.

Transition Forms — Transition forms such as those between the reptile and mammal in the evolution theory would have been very unfit to survive. Of course the evolutionist says that is why we do not find them today. The way these links came about, says the evolutionist, is either by genetic drift (chance) or selection. Real major changes occur in small population by genetic drift. However, small populations tend to keep around bad traits rather than good ones. Note, for example, the sixth finger which is common among the Amish.

Reverse Evolution — Sometimes evolution calls for a reverse evolving such as the pig being heir to the whale. The pig however, would have to have gone back into the water from which it was to have evolved out of. It would have to go back to the sea which would have been teeming with life that was well adapted to it. The chances of a pig surviving are very slim.

Mutualism — Evolutionists would be hard put to explain mutualism in nature. Certain things in nature are totally dependent on each other. For example, the Yucca plant is totally dependent on the Yucca moth for reproduction and the moth is totally dependent on the plant for food. How could the moth have evolved to be able to eat only one thing? How could the plant have evolved to depend solely on the moth for reproduction?

Math — I have stated before the evolutionist's claim that mutations are the raw materials for evolution. It is true that mutations produce small changes. It may seem that if you waited long enough for these small changes to summate, you could get a major change, but this is not the case. Math challenges evolution. It has been tried through a computer. There are 999 harmful mutations to every good mutation. Mutations drag a species down and natural selection is only a "brake" in the downhill slide. So you see mutations are only a change in an already existing trait. Mutation presupposes creation.

So to summarize mutation selection in a Christian perspective, I will say first: It really works, but it works for some traits, in some populations, in some places, at some times; and, if you say that, there is no evidence. Secondly, I tend to believe mutation-selection was a product of the Fall. The creation was subjected to futility by mutations and natural selection acts primarily as a "brake" on this futility.

I have presented various aspects of evolution with their "explanations" and I have also presented evidences against these "explanations." Some may think it is wrong to rebut in such a way the

arguments of evolutionists. You may say it is beneath the dignity of a Christian to enter into any sort of scientific debate with an evolutionist. I do not think so. Of course we carry the Bible and our faith as the best defense. But if this theory is wrong — and we know by faith it is — may we not also be investigating God's world for evidences that it is wrong?

The Evolutionism that I have presented is a rather easy one for the Christian to reject. Other theories contain a God-and-evolution combination in an attempt to satisfy natural man. Three other theories of the origin of the world are these: The Gap theory, Theistic evolution, and Progressive Creation.

1. Gap Theory — The gap or restitution theory is common among premillennial dispensationalists. The theory is that there is a huge gap between Genesis 1:1 and Genesis 1:2.

The reasoning behind this is that in Genesis 1:1 it says: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." They call this the first creation. In Genesis 1:2 they believe it should read "And the earth *became* (rather than *was*) without form and void." After this they believe there is a second creation of which we are part. The theory is that the earth was first created but then became chaotic when Satan fell from heaven. So then God destroyed the earth (which they say accounts for the fossils) and created again.

Objections to this theory are first; it is difficult to accept their translation of the Hebrew word as "became" instead of "was." They also seem to be reading a lot into what is not there. A second objection is that the life forms today are very similar to that of the fossils. On the whole, this theory is not too widely accepted.

2. Theistic Evolution — Theistic evolution is a compromising theory. It says evolutionism is correct, but then it also adds God to evolution. The theory holds the view that God worked behind the scenes. They get this from passages such as "Let the earth bring forth vegetation;" or, "Let the waters bring forth the moving creatures" (Genesis 1:11, 20).

The theistic evolutionist maintains that the Bible may tell us that God created but science tells us how He did it. This theory uses God to get over the humps in the evolutionary process. You cannot say that evolution is a means of creation. Evolution is a design without a Designer. Besides, having all the problems of regular evolution, the theory is inconsistent with God's whole nature.

3. Progressive Creation — Progressive creation is a lot like theistic evolution. Its proponents stress an old earth and the geological column (order of fossils) much like theistic evolution. Progressive creationists believe in the supernatural creation of *mature* beings rather than gradual evolution. This theory is rather synonymous with the day/age theory — where the days of Genesis 1 are referred to as periods of indefinite length. At the beginning of each period God created a mature form(s); However this view draws a sharp line between

geology created mature and biology created mature.

According to this theory, man was not created until millions of years after the dinosaur age. However, there is now proof that man and dinosaurs existed at the same time. With this theory it would also be difficult to say when God saw that "it was very good." Progressive creationists generally de-emphasize the Fall because it would have to come after all their many long periods. They also place all the fossils before the Fall. This denotes that death and destruction was present in what was seen by God as "very good."

Literal Days? — "It is often stated that the Bible is to be taken literally and that therefore "day" in Genesis refers to either a 24-hour day or something very close to that. The Bible is indeed to be taken literally, but the literal meaning of a passage is sometimes difficult to obtain. Understanding "day" in Genesis 1 is not easy, even though the word is to be taken literally."²

Dr. Russell Maatman explores the possibilities of the interpretation of the word "day" in Genesis to some depth. Being very objective, Dr. Maatman goes into many aspects, but lack of space prohibits me from listing them all. He shows that the Bible uses "day" for either solar days or long periods. Maatman concludes "that the creation days were not necessarily solar days, and that it is possible that at least some of them were long periods."²

On the other hand is the traditional creationist view, namely; "that God created the universe in six successive days, limited by morning and evening — six real ordinary days, like our days of twenty-four hours."¹

Rev. Homer Hoeksema says the periods theory may claim to be an interpretation of the term "day" in Genesis but he will deny they are indeed interpretations or that they are a legitimate exegesis of the text of Scripture. One of the passages Hoeksema cites comes from the Law. "Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of the Lord thy God . . . for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea and all that in them is, and on the seventh day He rested" (Exodus 20:9-11). Dr. Maatman recognizes this passage too and says it would be permissible to conclude that God's Sabbath and the creation days were solar days if you looked at this passage alone. Dr. Maatman then points out the passages where the Sabbath of the Lord is referred to as a year or long periods of time (the year of Jubilee Lev. 25:2-11). Also in the passage are six periods of work and one of rest. This again is the six-one pattern. Thus Maatman says there is not necessarily a time analogy involved but a pattern, so the creation days could have been long periods.

Dr. Edward J. Young in his important work entitled *Studies in Genesis One* has shown that the early chapters of Genesis bear none of the marks of poetry or saga or myth, but must be interpreted as literally as any other "straightforward, trustworthy history" recorded in Scripture.

Reading extensively on the day/age theory, I have found a constant seesaw of opinions. The same Scripture passages are interpreted in two different ways. Dr. Maatman's explanation was very convincing but so were the views of others. I would not be able to say "this is definitely proven correct." There is a lack of strong evidence either way. All I can say is what I believe. I believe in the six solar days. How can I believe this? — only by faith.

Conclusion

For my report I have reviewed creation and our church's CRC stand on it. I have studied in depth the various aspects of evolution and presented a number of theories. Reflecting now on what I have studied and read as a Christian I can do but one thing — turn again to the Bible. Over all the theories, ideas, and guesses of natural man the infallible Word of God plainly states, "In the beginning God created." I understand this creation to have been sudden and out of nothing. "By the Word of the Lord were the heavens made and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth. . . for He spake and it was done, He commanded and it stood fast" (Psalm 33:6-9).

Looking at modern Darwinian Palaeontologists it can be pointed out that they, just like their predecessors and Darwin are obliged to water down the facts with subsidiary hypotheses, which however plausible are in the nature of things unverifiable. Nor can we accept a hypothesis which shows God as a behind-the-scenes operator. The tendency of all such thinking is the same — the elevation of man. Our judgment of all such must be God's judgment as expressed by Paul in speaking of men "who changed the truth of God into a lie and worshipped the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed forever, Amen" (Romans 1:25). As Christians we have faith in God's Word-Revelation and understand that it must and does coincide with God's world-revelation. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned" (I Cor. 2:14).

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Conceived and Born in Sin

AALDERT MENNEGA

When we present our children for baptism, we acknowledge in the Form for the Baptism of Infants that our children are "conceived and born in sin." In a recent discussion it became evident that this is generally understood to mean that both conception and birth are sinful acts or events.

But what is conception? And what is birth? At conception a sperm penetrates an unfertilized egg, and thus a zygote is formed, and this single-celled structure then develops into a fetus, which, in due time, is born as a baby. Birth is the change from a comfortable, warm and wet environment in the uterus of the mother, to the cold, harsh environment of our society. It is also the entry into a home, and the beginning of active participation in family affairs.

The question now is, What is sinful about either of these two events? Is it sinful on the part of the egg or the sperm to be united together? Certainly, individual cells, before fertilization, cannot sin! Is the resulting one-celled zygote, then, guilty of sin in its being formed from the union of egg and sperm? But this is God's plan for starting a new human life.

Professor Aaldert Mennege, Ph.D., teaches Biology at Dordt College in Sioux Center, Iowa. Dr. Mennege writes that he teaches Embryology and that it is one of his favorite courses.

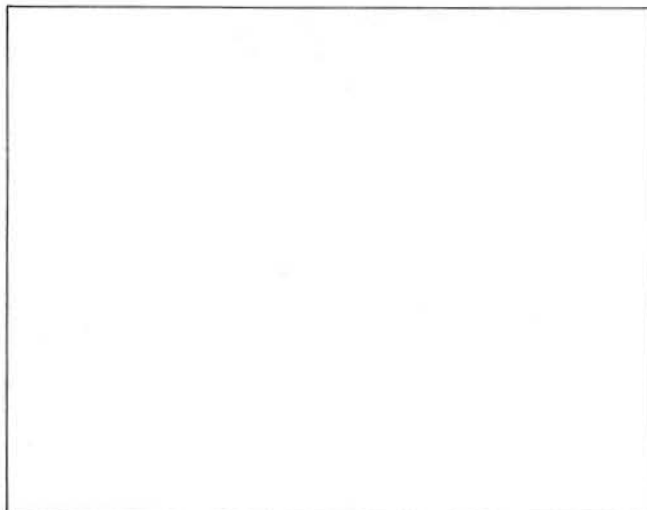
And there is no other way to start. Therefore, we cannot say that it is sinful to become a human being. Then, could it be that the mother is sinning in that she produces the ovum or that she provides the location for fertilization? Scripture clearly says that children are a blessing from the Lord. For that reason, producing an egg, or sperm, or nurturing a developing fetus, cannot be called a sinful act, and cannot be displeasing to the Lord! Well, does the sin then lie strictly in being born? Obviously, that question is rhetorical. Being born is not a sin, but an event for which we are deeply grateful to God, the Giver of life!

When we ask, then, where the sin lies when we speak of being "conceived and born in sin" we have to come to the conclusion that neither event is sinful. Conception and birth are natural events through which God brings a new human being into the world. Therefore a person does not sin by either starting life at conception or by being born.

What, then, is the meaning of the phrase "conceived and born in sin"? When Adam and Eve disobeyed God in the Garden of Eden and ate of the forbidden fruit, they became sinners. Everything they did after that was done by them as sinners, and what they did was always tainted with sin. And their children were no better than they. They did not have the ability to start out sinless, because they shared in the guilt of their parents. And in all the generations throughout time, all people have started with that same handicap of inherited guilt by sharing in the original sin-of-disobedience of Adam and Eve. There is now no part of life, not even before birth, of which we can say that a person is sinless. And that is what the form of baptism is saying — that this child which is being baptized, has been a sinner in the sight of God not only from birth but even from conception.

Each person, therefore, needs salvation from conception on, and needs cleansing and sanctification through Christ, to be incorporated in God's covenant with His chosen people.

We must not blame the marvels of conception and birth as being sinful, but remember that we are sinners from beginning to end. ●



Annual Meeting
of
Reformed Fellowship, Inc.

Thursday, September 29, 1977

at

Twelfth Ave. Christian Reformed Church
Jenison, Michigan

2:00 P.M. Business Meeting
and Address

by Rev. Rein Leestma
of Lynwood, Illinois on:
"The Reprobation Issue in the CRC"
(for all members and wives)

6:30 P.M. Banquet

(Jenison Jr. High — School St.,
East of Meijer Thrifty Acres)

Order your reservations for Banquet
no later than September 15, 1977
by writing to:

Reformed Fellowship
P. O. Box 7383
Grand Rapids, Mich. 49510
Tickets: \$5.00 each



Dr. Edwin H. Palmer

**Everyone
Invited**

8:15 P.M. Inspirational Meeting

(12th Avenue Christian Reformed Church)

Speaker — Dr. Edwin H. Palmer
of Wayne, New Jersey

Topic — "CRC — Where Are You Going?"
(All meetings at Twelfth Ave. CRC)