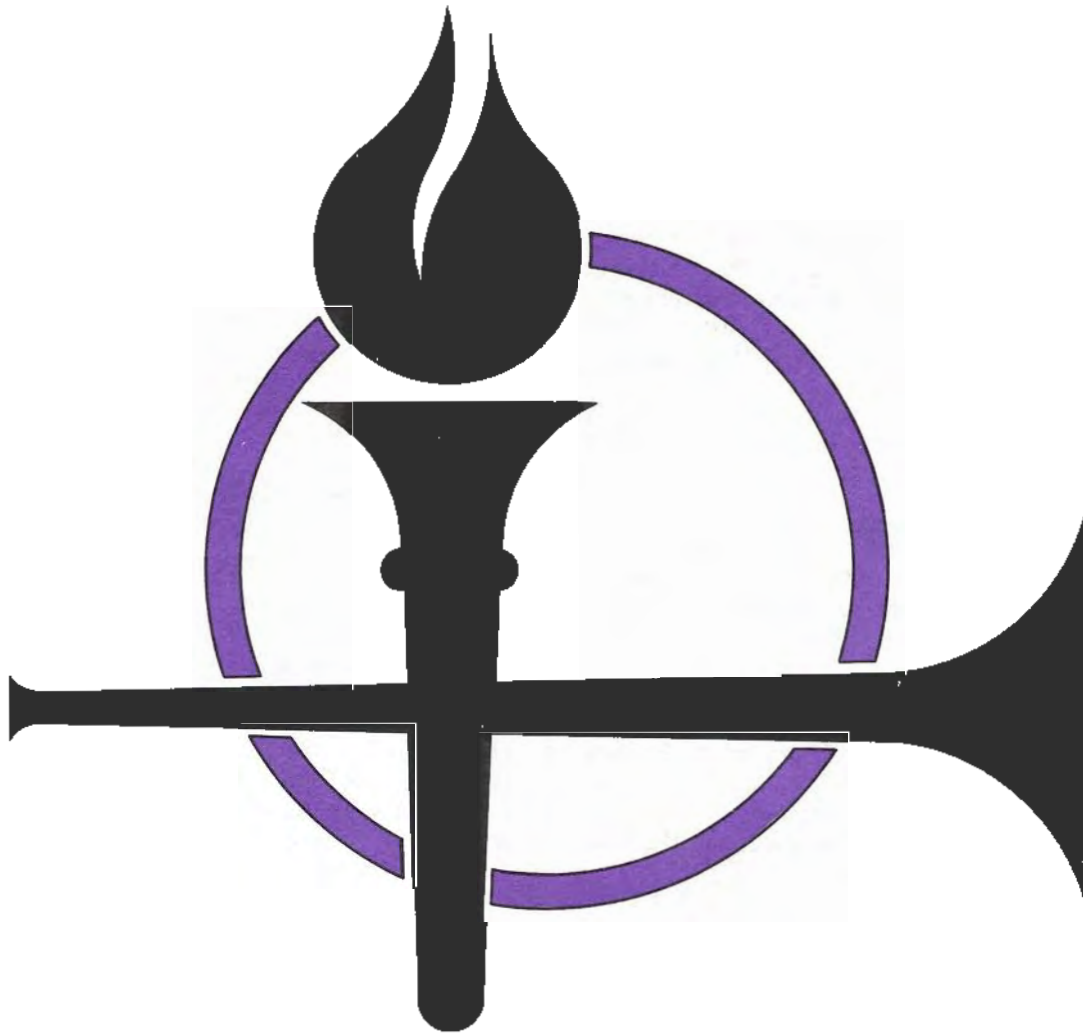


# THE OUTLOOK

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DEVOTED TO THE EXPOSITION AND DEFENSE OF THE REFORMED FAITH

MAY 1979



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**EVANGELICAL & INERRANCY**  
**SYNOD AGENDA**  
**GOOD PREACHERS**

# WHAT'S COMING UP AT THE CRC SYNOD?

Peter De Jong

The meeting of our churches' representatives in their annual June Synod is a significant event which the *Outlook* usually makes a special effort to cover. I have been asked to make a preliminary survey of the agenda for that meeting. The 568 pages of material may be looked at from various points of view. The reports of the churches' agencies may be studied somewhat as corporation reports are studied by the directors or stockholders before their annual meeting to determine from the columns of statistics the size of the business and its profits or losses. Considering the business of the churches in this way as it is reported in the agenda would lead to one kind of conclusion. The *Outlook* and its readers are less interested in these numbers and statistics than in what the reports may indicate is happening to the work and cause of the biblical Reformed faith in the various areas and activities of the churches. Seeking to determine that is a more complex and difficult matter. To the extent that it can be done it may lead to quite different conclusions than those of a statistical and financial report.

## Radio

As usual the first and one of the most encouraging reports comes from the Back-to-God Hour, "the only organization of its size that is directly related to a single church" (p. 12) in this field, accountable to the churches and seeking "to proclaim the entire Bible the whole counsel of God". The report speaks of the growing Arabic work of Rev. B. Madany, the French Broadcast of Rev. A. Kayayan, the Spanish, Portuguese, Chinese, Indonesian and Japanese as well as English outreach. The report also speaks of the new efforts to use TV.

## Calvin College and Seminary

Calvin College and Seminary have through the history of our churches had a strategic role in that they are the schools in which the churches' leadership has been trained. As such, they cannot help but profoundly influence our at present troubled churches by the views which they hold and teach.

The seminary proposes to appoint "a member of a minority race" to its faculty. Naturally, no one should object to the appointment of any qualified teacher because of his race. Now, however, the only reason given for admitting one to this position is his being non-white, and the reason for establishing the position is the alleged need for someone from another race to provide the "illuminating experience" required to equip people for the gospel ministry. In this case, doesn't the school's Reformed

commitment to the gospel which transcends all differences of race and class seem to be giving way to following a modern gospel derived from and determined by social experience?

In recent practice appointments to the college faculty have been made by the board of trustees, but appointments to the seminary faculty have been made by the Synod itself. Now the board proposes that this be changed so that also seminary faculty appointments be made by the board — another significant step away from what little control the churches through the Synod still have in determining who will teach their future leaders (pp. 43-45).

## World Missions

The Board of World Missions proposes that the present Committee for Educational Assistance to Churches Abroad be reorganized to also take over planning, organizing and publishing needed Reformed literature in the major languages of the world (p. 52).

It is also proposing to loan two missionary families to work in the Sepik River Valley of New Guinea in connection with the educational missionary program which the Orneal Kooyers family have been carrying on for over a decade since they began working there with the Wycliffe Translators.

We note that the Nigeria report mentions 110 congregations, 1800 places of worship and 260,000 church attendants in that field in which our missions have been working (p. 64). From a high of 14 missionary positions in Japan, work there is being reduced to 8 or 10 (p. 68).

## Home Missions

The Home Missions Report includes a proposal that the home missions board approve grants-in-aid instead of bringing them to the Synod for action as has been the practice. (p. 87). This too is a significant step toward shifting control of this work of the church away from the decisions of the churches through their Synod delegates to the more independent management of a board. While we hear much less about "boardism" than we used to (although another proposed change speaks of more local responsibility and control) hear a few decades ago we are seeing much more of it. In the "Report on Evangelism Principles and Strategy" one wonders whether the bald assumption, "God expects his church to grow" (p. 96) doesn't echo a current mythological fad rather than the realism of God's revelation. Isaiah's message, to which the report makes an excellent introductory appeal (p. 78), assured the prophet of no such thing (Isaiah 6; cf. Rom. 11:8). One observes that our Canadian churches increased their quota support from 41.5% in 1968 to 78% in 1977 (p. 103).

## Publications

The Board of Publications wants a "radical" change of organization placing its activities under the control of one administrator. In the current organization and performance of our churches'

work, does anyone remember the principle still maintained in article 95 of our Church Order, "no office-bearer shall lord it over another office-bearer"?

For *The Banner* the Board does not favor a "multiple-editorship" proposed by Grand Rapids East. The Synod will have to choose a new editor for *The Banner*.

Since 1970 the Synod has approved and the Board has been producing a curriculum for a "united church school". Despite the apparent logic of providing such a unified program of education a substantial number of our churches have not adopted this system because it "consciously abandoned" (Acts 1973, p. 232) making the Catechism the basis of the churches education and does not systematically teach the Biblical doctrines as the older methods attempted to do. These churches still "teach catechism classes" insisting on more substantial materials. The current agenda report on these denominational educational materials seems to state more accurately than it even intends, "We're simply not always sure what it means to be Reformed, even though we are sure it's important" (p. 120).

### World Relief

The World Relief Committee reports that the main change in its work has been the introduction of "new systems of reporting and control" of its various activities. While the committee has been having to consolidate and reduce and more carefully control some of its own diverse efforts, last year's Synod also saddled it with a responsibility for the new program of its "Task Force on World Hunger". That program was to have raised one percent of every Christian Reformed Church member's income to relieve the world's hunger in some undetermined ways. Now the committee complains "that funds were being diverted from our existing world hunger programs to the new world hunger program" (p. 152). Instead of the millions of dollars that one percent of Christian Reformed incomes would have totalled the committee reports that "the world hunger fund brought in a total of \$85,211" (p. 161). Plainly, while our membership continues to show its readiness to give generously where there is a responsible effort to help the needy in Christ's name, most members are by no means ready to irresponsibly turn over money to ecclesiastical theories who don't know what they are going to do with it but envision "restructuring the world". (*Agenda* 1978, p. 463). Among a variety of needed help programs one still wonders how "partial funding of the director's salary" for a family counselling service in our big Christian Reformed Edmonton community can be justified (p. 159). What can easily be done locally should not be shifted to the whole denomination.

### Fund for Needy Churches

The Fund For Needy Churches Report calls attention to what it sees as indications of misuse of denominational help. "We find churches seeking help from the denomination while supporting rather

# THE OUTLOOK

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*"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).*

## JOURNAL OF REFORMED FELLOWSHIP, INC.

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large faith-promise commitments; churches giving very large amounts to non-quota causes while failing to pay their full denominational quotas; churches supporting rather substantially, evangelism projects apart from their church; churches over-paying their required debt reduction while failing to pay full quotas and only the minimum per family for their pastor's salary" whereas they "ought to become self-supporting as soon as possible" (p. 192).

### Liturgical Forms: Marriage

Both revealing and increasing the disunity of our churches over a number of years has been the succession of new liturgical forms put out by the Synod's liturgical committee. Its new form for marriage was approved for trial use by the churches in 1977. I had occasion last year to point out that that form "in its capitulation to the modern liberation fad, in the vows pointedly refused to recognize the God-given distinction between the role of man and woman in marriage and even presumed to instruct God in the prayer how He ought to counsel the partners when they become bored with each other!" That form now comes back recommended for adoption with slight changes apparently in concession to criticisms. There is now added to the instruction the statement that God "instructs the wife to be subject to her husband in a way which reflects the church's subjection to Christ, its head. He also instructs the husband to pattern his love for his wife after the example of Christ's love for his body, the church. He says, 'Wives be subject to your husbands as to the Lord,' and 'Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her . . .'" This is an improvement in the admonitions, but the vows remain unchanged. In these promises the couple need not acknowledge any such difference between the role and responsibilities of husband and wife, although they have earlier expressed "agreement with God's message concerning marriage". This is still a significant concession to the anti-Christian liberation movement. The committee report earlier frankly acknowledges the rift that exists in the church and even appears in the committee at such points as this: "We recognize that a single form which emphasizes what each person would like to emphasize would be impossible to produce". "The committee experienced considerable difficulty in arriving at consensus when it attempted to state explicitly how the husband and wife should conduct themselves in the marriage." (p. 233). (The increasing differences in the churches on such matters are not just a difference of tastes as the comment suggests. The Bible passages are explicit enough, but the "new hermeneutics" increasingly accepted among us suggests that they were "culturally conditioned" and no longer apply.) The florid and presumptuous prayer at the end of the form is now made optional.

### Excommunication

Comparing the new proposed form for excommunication with that currently being used reveals some striking changes and deletions. The "grievous

offense" involved becomes mere "discredit to the body of Christ". The stern warnings of the old form about the seriousness of and the persistence in that offense has been dropped, the warnings against the temptations of the devil, the confession of sins on the part of the church and especially the biblical call to separation from the sins which offend God and from the fellowship of those who persist in them have been removed. It is significant that the secretary of the committee, Rev. Alvin Hoksbergen, cannot agree with even this watered-down form for excommunication. He informs us on the last page of the Agenda (p. 568, as he also indicated in a recent *Banner* article) that he really wants no excommunication from Christ's church and kingdom which is not shared by all other denominations, and does not want any such action taken in a public meeting of the church.

### Ordaining Elders and Deacons

The proposed form for the ordination of elders and deacons is haunted by the 1973 study committee report on ecclesiastical office and ordination. That committee in its earlier and revised report persistently refused to recognize the Bible's teaching that there is any real authority or "ruling" in church office. It wanted nothing but "service", reflecting the anti-Christian opposition to authority so characteristic of modern society. The Synods, after unsuccessfully trying to get the committee to correct this fundamentally deficient report, finally doctored up the final version with some brief statements about the biblically taught authority of the offices. Now this liturgical committee refers not to that deficient study committee report but to the report of the 1973 Synod's *advisory* committee which "strikes a balance between authority and service" (p. 220) and seeks "to capture" that balance in its proposed form. Unfortunately, in this "balance" any stress on the elders having to "rule" has still virtually disappeared, aside from a passing remark about their "governing the church". Perhaps the most serious alteration found in the proposed form is in what has been done to the officer's commitment to the Bible and the confessions. The old form reads, "Do you believe the Old and New Testament to be the only Word of God, and the doctrinal standards of this church to be in harmony therewith"? The proposed form asks, "Do you believe that the Old and New Testaments, as confessed and taught in this church, are the Word of God, the completely reliable rule of faith and life; and do you reject every doctrine which contradicts them? Notice that any acknowledgement that the Bible is the *only* Word of God has been dropped and that one is not really committed to it at all but only to it "as confessed and taught in this church" (whatever that may happen to be) and that all allusion to the doctrinal standards has been dropped. The promise, despite the sound of its concluding phrases really ties one to nothing at all for it is all qualified by "as confessed and taught in this church". Also submission to the discipline of the church in office now becomes a modifier of the

previous promises rather than a separate question. In the charges to officers, although the elders' variety of service is developed, their ruling is de-emphasized and there is no longer an explicit reference to "being watchmen . . . taking heed that purity of doctrine and godliness of life be maintained", but only a mention of "rebuke and discipline". The charge to deacons is considerably extended reflecting the sociological interests of the committee. "Study the structures and patterns of modern society, that you may be counselors to their victims and prophetic critics of waste, injustice and selfishness". "Prophetic criticism" of society seems to be displaying the biblical concern of church offices with "godliness of doctrine and purity of life".

### Evangelists

Last year's Synod decided that the church was at liberty to multiply and define offices as it might see fit, whether or not the Bible gave it any directions for doing so, and established the new office of "evangelist". Considering this unbiblical principle, the committee in constructing its ordination form for evangelists musters and includes a considerable amount of biblical material dealing with evangelism.

### Ministers' Pensions

The Ministers' Pension Fund committee reports that it still has an unfunded liability in excess of \$16,000,000 "almost entirely because the basic pension was increased over the years from \$3,620 in 1970 to \$4,840 in 1978 (p. 230). It is recommending that Canada pensions be separated from those of the U.S. because of differing government regulations.

### Race

The Synodical Committee on Race Relations (SCORR) wants to increase its personnel "to recruit and develop minority readership" and enlarge its budget by over \$50,000. This committee came into existence not as a result of any specific need for a separate agency but as a gesture to get in on the preoccupation of our society with race problems. The result was that a committee was appointed with a grandiose mandate to work "to eliminate racism, both causes and effects, within the body of believers, and throughout the world in which we live" (p. 247) but with no specific job or assignment! The result was predictable. Half or more of the budget has been used for "administration to manage the office and its activities, and the rest has been given to other agencies who do have their own jobs. As the report says, "This stance has had two negative effects: it is very hard to report on, and it makes the committee's work almost invisible." "It makes our work almost invisible because if we are successful, someone else rightly claims responsibility for the results". (p. 244). In these times of escalating costs of everything and the need to cut out needless expenditures, has the time not come when this committee which has no job of its own but channels its working funds to others should be eliminated instead of enlarged? Not only is channel-

ing funds through an unneeded agency a wasteful procedure; maintaining a separate committee to emphasize "race" is threatening us with a distortion of the gospel. The report tells us that the Christian Reformed Church needs "Black theology" and its "Native American and Hispanic counterparts . . . lest we become an impoverished and impotent church". It seems at this point that the God's Gospel which knows no bounds of race is being displaced by a gospel which is produced by and crippled without the experience of each race — as though the gospel were produced by the color of our skins! This is really a "racist heresy" (which we have also observed in the seminary report).

### Synodical Interim Committee

The Synodical Interim Committee, responding to an assignment of the previous Synod recommends that "Synod discontinue the practice of appointing an Advisory Committee on Appointments" (p. 261) in view of the fact that it really had little to do. It proposes that nominations for committees should be channeled through the Stated Clerk's office and study committee appointments be made by the advisory committee suggesting the study and the officers of Synod. There may be a good argument for eliminating this advisory committee. What I find disturbing, however, is that this looks like another step in the direction of placing appointment of important committees in the hands of relatively few people. In the *Outlook* of December 1977, I observed that especially two prevailing practices were converting our denominational assemblies from the representative bodies they were intended to be into a "political machine". One was control of the agenda by which many materials properly submitted by the churches could be kept out of the printed agenda. The other was control of committees. Eliminating the Synod committee on appointments and referring the appointments to other committees or the clerk's office would appear to aggravate rather than correct this second harmful practice. Looking over the agenda one again sees instances in which committees, nominating their own successors keep the work of the committee in a little circle of area people, especially preachers or professors, who have been largely controlling denominational activities. In the matter of appointments some means should be devised to make them more representative of our 700 churches.

The Stated Clerk's plea that agenda reports be made "as clear and concise as possible" deserves special attention. Most of them would be much more useful if they were shorter and simpler.

### Capital Punishment

In 1976 Classis Orange City asked our Synod to address our governments in favor of capital punishment. The committee to which this matter was entrusted now gives us a 40-page study. The study begins with a philosophical analysis in which it concedes that "Punishment is at its center retributive" rather than utilitarian, but hastens to add that

Christian ethics may also regard the opposite principle of the usefulness of punishment.

"It is a sound principle of jurisprudence that no law should be enacted which has no or very little prospect of finding moral support and consequent observance within the community" (pp. 298-299). The larger part of the following study becomes an argument against the tradition in Reformed theology and ethics that God's righteousness "demands" the death penalty for murder. It is instructive to study the way in which the committee labors to set aside especially the injunction of Genesis 9:6 "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man". We are told that this is not really concerned about retribution but about "societal protection". Since God is concerned about the security of man as his "image" if that security "could be attained by . . . restraints short of execution, would he really be offended?" We are told that "we are here confronted not with a *command*, but with an allowable way . . .", that God had given different directions in the case of Cain, that this may have been a temporary correction of the pre-flood violence and that "in other times, and in other circumstances such measures may not be necessary", that we no longer regard the injunction "Be fruitful and multiply" as applicable in our crowded world", that the text was not talking about governments, that it may have been merely a proverb, or a prediction rather than a command (though the report concedes that this last suggestion is not likely) (pp. 301-308). Later, coming back to this text again, the report suggests "it is doubtful that capital punishment either enhances the public's regard for man's special status in God's world, or is one of the better ways in which the state can give expression to its esteem for human-kind" (p. 319). Finally the report attacks the integrity and unity of the text attempting to separate the two parts because the committee expresses "doubt that God could present as a *reason* for the death penalty the fact that man is made in the image of God" (p. 320). While killings are sometimes necessary for the public good", "they are not something either God or man can posit as a goal or establish as a plan" (p. 321).

Could anything reveal more clearly the critical arrogance with which the Bible is treated with by this committee, (headed by professors whose sympathies for the "new interpretations" are well known)? With this kind of argument, the committee concludes that the Bible does not demand capital punishment for murder, but that it does permit it, and pragmatically suggests that it should be used only "under extreme conditions" (p. 333). The report despite its length and detail, will be no more convincing to Bible-believing Christians than other such "higher-critically" controlled studies have been.

### Contemporary Testimony

The "Contemporary Testimony Committee" proposes further steps toward preparing a "contemporary testimony" (short of a new creed) to officially speak concerning the issues of our time. (Cited

among indications of current interest in statements of faith is "Our Testimony" published in the *Outlook*, (p. 348).) The committee envisions a testimony that will be orthodox opposing apostasy, pious, articulate a "kingdom" vision and be ecclesiastical. It mentions issues that should be covered, but favors a statement reflecting the full perspective of the faith rather than one directly issue-oriented. It would leave the relationship of such a document to present creeds undefined, have it developed by a CRC committee and later referred to other corresponding churches and suggests the kind of cooperative members needed for a committee to formulate it.

### Belgic Confession

Another committee presents a new translation of the Belgic Confession. Perhaps most interesting in its report is its information on the differences between Guido De Breys and John Calvin regarding especially their views of the relationship of church and state and its appeal away from the version of the confession in common use to an earlier, little known, apparently more authentic one showing significant differences in emphasis between De Bres and the revisors. De Bres it seems was less scholastic in his view, inclined to stress sin and man's depravity and had a somewhat different emphasis in dealing with predestination. The committee chooses for going back to the older version. This matter would seem to call for further study. Are the differences as extensive as the report indicates and is the church prepared to follow the committee's choice in deciding on the official version of its creed?

### World Hunger

The Task Force on World Hunger follows up its claim that something must be done to change world economic structures. Its 31 pages lead to little more than a call for the practice of love and justice in Christian behavior and for Christians to organize to bring about changes.

### The Verhey Case

It is somewhat surprising to find among the "Reports of Study Committees" Neland Avenue Consistory's defense of Dr. Allan Verhey and Dr. Verhey's own defense which it endorses, totalling 19 pages. This is really a response to the case of the Dutton consistory against the views of Dr. Verhey which is found as Appeal Number 32 (pp. 561-566) in the back of the *Agenda*. The previous issue of the *Outlook* (April, pp. 13-15) included a concise summary of the Dutton Consistory's objections to Dr. Verhey's views so that there is no need to repeat that here. That article may form a useful starting point to help the average reader understand what the problem is. Dr. Verhey's and Neland Avenue Consistory's defense of his views are an extended and generalizing discussion of Bible interpretation. In it he says that he believes that the Bible is the authoritative and inspired Word of God, and his consistory and the classis, mainly on that ground, de-

send his views. But this kind of defense is mostly irrelevant and diverts attention from the point at issue. We must object not to what he says he believes about the Bible, but to his use and defense of a method of dealing with it which permits him at will to deny what the Bible plainly says. Merely saying "I believe the Bible" does not thereafter give him the right to turn Matthew into a false witness, who, no doubt with pious intentions, lied about what actually happened and about what Jesus actually said and did. The Dutton consistory is convinced that the church may not let its ministers and professors get away with this kind of double-talk in preaching and teaching God's Word.\*

*\*Incidentally, the Neland Ave. material repeats the erroneous charge (Note, p. 475-6) that the Dutton Consistory "requested Dr. Verhey to come to its meeting" and first granted and there refused permission to have someone accompany him. The facts are that not the consistory but Dr. Verhey asked for the meeting, and that he on the day of the meeting announced that he was taking Dr. Bandstra from the seminary with him. Members of the consistory who could be contacted felt that his arrangement bringing in a seminary professor without its approval was inappropriate and so informed him. The Neland Avenue consistory was informed of the falsity of its charge in a letter of May 10, 1978. Its appeal to the Acts of 1971 dealing with Synodical procedures are irrelevant to this matter.*

### Overtures and Appeals

What must startle many who receive the Agenda is the presence in the last section of 49 overtures and 33 printed appeals. The Stated Clerk does not seem to have used the discretionary authority given by the Synod of 1971 which he has in recent years been rather freely using, not to print in the Agenda matters which repeated material already brought up from other quarters. One overture (#19, p. 513) would require that all such materials be given to all delegates because they were sent by members, churches and classes for consideration and action by the Synod and because withholding them from all delegates by the committee seriously limits Synodical consideration and action. A printed appeal (# 31, p. 560-1) would also delete the rule permitting such materials to be excluded from the printed agenda because "this procedure nullifies the right of members, churches and classes to overture and appeal to Synod, which right is guaranteed" by the church order, infringes upon the "original" authority of consistories, a basic principle of the church order, inhibits free discussion of these matters by consistories and classes, lacks adequate ground (an alleged financial saving) and was not properly adopted.

Three of the overtures (# 4, 5, 6) would have the Synod approve the New International Bible Version. One (# 22, p. 514-5) seeks to establish a minimum ministers' salary, three (# 23, 24, 49) have objections to the funding of the ministers' pension fund, and one (#25) would seek better health insurance for the ministers.

One overture wants a study of artificial insemination by a donor (#47). The overwhelming mass of this material, some 19 overtures and 31 appeals are reac-

tions to the decision of last year to admit women to the office of deacon. Only two favor the action, one wanting women also as elders (overture 34) and one appealing to maintain the decision about women deacons (appeal 33); the rest are for the most part strongly opposed. Six of the overtures want to change or correct the Synod's hasty and irregular changing of the church order (overtures 7 to 12) by making it more difficult to push through such changes. Several ask for clarification of the decision and others would withhold ratification of the changes. Thirty appeals express strong opposition to the decision, most of them directing attention to its violation of the Bible's teaching, and its contradiction of the creeds and church order.

It is apparent that this unprecedented reaction against last year's hasty decision should make this matter one of the major pieces of business before this Synod.

The first two overtures asking the Synod to reaffirm the inerrancy of the Bible because Dr. Harry Boer\* and others are frankly denying it, and the Verhey case which deals with the same matter, really raise one of the basic issues confronting the church. Does the denomination still believe the Bible or not? Whether it holds, or compromises or denies that may be the most serious decision it has to make. May the Lord guide it and us. ●

\*p. 505. (Notice also personal appeal #2 p. 567.)

### LORD, LEAD THE WAY

*If there be someone, Lord, who  
needs a smile,  
If one must be assured life is  
worthwhile,  
If I today must walk the extra mile —  
Lord, lead the way.*

*If there be someone, Lord, who  
is in need,  
If I be called to do a kindly deed;  
If I must go and sow the  
precious seed —  
Lord, lead the way.*

*If there be someone, Lord,  
whose faith is weak,  
If I must go some wandering  
soul to seek;  
If I be asked to turn the other cheek —  
Lord, lead the way.*

*For if I live for others I will see  
That any joys I bring will come  
But since my strength must to me:  
come from Thee —  
O Precious Savior, lead the way.*

Annetta Jansen  
Dorr, Michigan

# MOTHER'S DAY

Albert Meyer

**"... but a foolish man despises his mother."  
Proverbs 15:20b**

**"The future destiny of the child is always the  
work of the mother."**

**Napoleon**

When Mrs. Bootsma asked me to write an article for this issue, I found it not difficult to accept. Like most men I do regard my mother as the one who set an example of unwavering love and loyalty to her children. Now that my own mother has left this earth, I find that our own children have the same regard for their mother. It seems that even drunks and criminals esteem their mothers as very special people. A while ago, I heard a story from a former policeman about a mother-beater who was punished by his skid row cell-mates.

This forty-year-old man was living with his old mother, not working and not supporting her in any way. Just bumming around and, when drunk, was in the habit of beating her up. She had called the police several times to take him to the "cooler", the place where drunks are kept for a night to sober up. The police despised this man not so much for drinking, but for living off his mother and beating her. They would have liked to have the mother lay charges, but the old lady never wished to do so. The policemen were also tempted to "rough up" the man a little, but of course this is against the rules. So once more, the mother called for police assistance, and they transported the man to the station, and put him in a cell with other "pick ups". They "warned" the occupants that a dangerous man was brought in who had just given his seventy-year-old mother a severe beating, and gave them a rather gruesome description of the state of the mother.

After the police left the cell block, they heard quite a bit of commotion in the prison quarters. When things had settled down they went to have a look and found the bad son laying on the floor, badly beaten. When the officer asked them what had happened, they said: "He fell off the bunk and hurt himself." The moral of the story: even those who did disregard the teachings of their mothers, and became excessive drinkers, still possess a great deal of disgust for a person who has sunk low enough to brutalize his mother. One may thus conclude that even on skid row, motherhood is regarded as though not sacred, as something to hold in esteem.

Today is Mothers' Day again, and whether we still have a mother or not, we are reminded by means of the media, the business world, and Mothers' Day sermons, of the importance of a mother's role in the

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*This contribution of Mr. Meyer appeared previously in the Onward magazine of the Christian Reformed Church of Brantford, Ontario, Canada.*

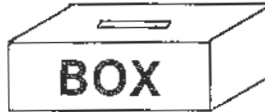
lives of her children. Judging by all this activity, one might think that motherhood is at its peak in human history. Alas, there is overwhelming evidence to the contrary. The dislike of authority, the generation gap, women's liberation and the like have contributed to the decline of motherhood. Many teenagers despise their mothers and "women's libbers" have convinced many a mother that staying home and doing household chores is just a few steps away from slavery. It appears that even our first lady in Ottawa has been bitten by the liberation bug. Yes, motherhood is on the decline. Not long ago abortion was considered one of the most abhorred crimes in humanity. Killing an unborn baby was such a hideous thing that only a young woman in extreme despair would go to some sinister back alley abortionist to seek relief, and society as a whole was strongly opposed to this. But things are changing fast lately. "Honour your father and mother" is taken with a grain of salt even among the children of God.

In the "light of science" we are told that murderers, sex deviates and all sorts of criminals are the result of mothers (and fathers) who are overly domineering and/or strict in the upbringing of their children. Thus many of the ills of our society are blamed on the narrow mindedness of Bible-thumping Christians who are against the so much desired freedoms of our age. According to Margaret Mead, a well-known anthropologist, the family as we know it now, father, mother and children (the nucleus family) is on its way out. Judging by the development of the last half century she may well be right. The secular society is rapidly moving away from old values based on biblical concepts. Issues such as sexual freedom, premarital sex, extra-marital sex, homosexuality, abortion and sexual equality are more and more becoming discussion items. Christians are getting confused and bewildered. Some feel we should somehow adapt to the changing times in order to keep the "now" generation from being swept along with the currents of unbelief. They consider themselves advanced christians and the term "tradition" is enough to ruffle their feathers. Others want to hang on to anything and everything what was considered appropriate in the past. Difficult times for a mother to give guidance to her offspring, and though the need for Bible study is more stringent than ever, women's societies (and men's societies) are on the decline.

May this Mothers' Day mean more to us than giving lip service to motherhood and for a change doing the dishes or serving breakfast in bed. There will be many surprises in eternity, and one of them may well be that a mother who was instrumental in bringing up her children in the fear of the Lord, has achieved far more than a father who has been working from dawn to dusk in order to provide his family with luxury and status in the community. George Herbert, the English clergyman and poet, is quoted as saying: "One mother is worth a hundred school-masters." May this Mothers' Day be an opportunity to reflect and meditate on the sayings of the author of Proverbs and others. ●



## OUR QUESTION



### “THE HOMOSEXUAL”

Harlan Vanden Einde

A young peoples' group from Michigan raises the question about the homosexual as a result of an article that appeared in *The Insight* magazine on this same subject. Their question: "What is a Christian homosexual?"

In answering this question, it is very important that we begin with a definition of terms. Our thinking about this subject is sometimes muddled because we fail to do that. A "homosexual" is a person who has erotic attractions for members of the same sex, and who may or may not actually engage in homosexuality. "Homosexuality" is explicit homosexual practice. And "homosexuality" is a condition of personal identity in which the person is sexually oriented toward persons of the same sex.

There is no doubt that the Bible condemns homosexuality, that is, the explicit homosexual practice, as incompatible with obedience to the will of God. It is placed on a par with adultery and murder. In I Corinthians 6:9,10 we read: "Or know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolators, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with men, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God." Paul writes much the same in I Timothy 1:10, and again in Romans 1:26,27. So it is clear from Scripture that the practice of homosexuality is contrary to the will of God.

But is it possible for a person to be a homosexual, that is, to have an attraction to the members of the same sex, but not want to be that way, and in fact, never practice homosexuality? That's the real question we are wrestling with now, and that was the question with which the committee that reported to the Synod of 1973 wrestled too. It's something like asking: "what is a Christian alcoholic?" Drunkenness is also condemned in Scripture as incompatible with the will of God. But I would never conclude from that that an alcoholic could never be a Chris-

tian. I have personally worked with a Christian alcoholic for a number of years. This person was afflicted with "alcoholism", (I do not excuse this person's responsibility, but one drink made this individual lose control of self) and he wanted help in fighting it. We talked and we prayed and we used every means available, and I thank God that this person is no longer drinking today, in other words, is not a drunkard. But this person will always be an alcoholic, meaning that this person will always have to refrain from any amount of alcohol, lest there be a return to uncontrollable drunkenness.

I believe that Synod was saying much the same about the homosexual, though the parallel is not the same at all points. I know of a young man who spent tearful hours and thousands of dollars with Christian counselors, seeking to overcome his homosexual tendencies. He never practiced homosexuality, that is, the overt act. He was a Christian, and he hated what he was because he knew it was not God's will. He was a Christian homosexual, the kind of person the Synod of 1973 was directing us to when they said that the church must exercise patient understanding and compassion for. This in no way means that we put a stamp of approval on "homosexuality" as acceptable to God; we do not put a stamp of approval on drunkenness as acceptable to God when we try to help an alcoholic overcome his alcoholism. We recognize both as a sin, but a sin for which there is forgiveness when there is repentance, as well as the power of God's grace in overcoming the sinful practice.

I felt a deep sense of love, pity and compassion for this alcoholic with whom I worked. If this individual had said to me: "I don't believe drunkenness is a sin, and I will keep on drinking regardless of what happens," I would have felt differently, and the problem would not likely have been solved.

If there is a homosexual who wants to justify his homosexuality, and who believes it is not incompatible with the will of God, that is another matter. It would be inconsistent for such a person to confess to be a Christian.

I am very thankful for the amazing grace of God, on the basis of which both overt sins, and the sins of the thought and heart pertaining to adultery, murder (Matthew 5:21,22,28) and many others, can be forgiven when there is repentance, through the atoning work of the living Christ. ☉

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*I agree, also on the basis of a pastor's observations, with Rev. Vanden Einde's stress on the need to distinguish between the person tempted by this perversion and the practice which the Bible tells us is an abomination to God and will bring his judgment on any civilization which condones it. One wonders, however, whether calling someone a "homosexual" even though he or she has never engaged in the practice or has long since turned from it, can be justified. Do we keep on calling someone a "thief" long after he has reformed or even if he has never stolen? The Bible seems to point us in an opposite direction. "Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral... nor adulterers... nor homosexual offenders nor thieves... will inherit the kingdom of God. And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God" (1 Cor. 6:9-11 NIV).*

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# KANT, JASTROW, AND THE THEOLOGIAN

WILLIAM H. KOOIENGA

**God and the Astronomers**, by Robert Jastrow:  
W.W. Norton and Co., New York; 1978, 136pp.

**Until the Sun Dies**, Robert Jastrow:  
W.W. Norton and Co., New York; 1977, 172pp.

Robert Jastrow comes with scientific credentials in order. He is the Director of the Goddard Institute for Space Studies of NASA, professor of Astronomy and Geology at Columbia University, and professor of Earth Science at Dartmouth College. His writings range from the popular to the profound. These two editions serve as a sample of the former.

**God and the Astronomers** traces the development of what some call the "Big Bang Theory". The study of astronomy leads to a new theory, that the universe was created in a brilliant explosion of light and heat. His description of the theory leads the Christian to the account of God's creative work found in Genesis 1:3, "And God said, 'Let there be light.' And there was light".

One theme running through the book is the reaction of prominent scientists to the thought of a beginning. Many simply refused to accept the idea in spite of evidence and arguments. He quotes such giants as Eddington and Einstein to the effect that such ideas are senseless and repugnant. Further studies only strengthened the theory until today it is widely accepted.

The other stand which surfaces in this book shows the theological implication. As Jastrow states it, "The scientist has scaled the mountains of ignorance; he is about to conquer the highest peak; as he pulls himself over the final rock, he is greeted by a band of theologians who have been sitting there for centuries". Such was the trauma within the circles of science over the evidence for creation.

Now the Christian reader of Jastrow's little book would hope to see evidence of a belief in God. How can you have creation, especially with a theory that admits a sudden beginning, without a God who creates? Since the scientific theory has at least some parallels to Genesis one, you might hope for a recognition of the personal God who is. And if you

are an optimist you might even scan the pages to see if this creation theory has led him to some knowledge of the Word through Whom all things were made. On the very first page, the scientist dashes any such hope. "When an astronomer writes about God, his colleagues assume he is either over the hill or going bonkers. In my case it should be understood from the start that I am an agnostic in religious matters." Well, Well; what went wrong?

That Robert Jastrow remains agnostic in religious matters is due to his faith. His position is clear. The clarity of his stated position helps us to understand the insides of a modern scientist. In *Until the Sun Dies* he writes a surprisingly honest statement. When discussing the origin of life, he says:

"Perhaps the appearance of life on earth is a miracle. Scientists are reluctant to accept that view, but their choices are limited: *either* life was created on the earth by the will of a being outside the grasp of scientific understanding, *or* it evolved on our planet spontaneously, through chemical reaction occurring in nonliving matter lying on the surface of the planet.

"The first theory places the questions of the origin of life beyond the reach of scientific enquiry. It is a statement of faith in the power of a Supreme Being not subject to the laws of science.

"The second theory is also an act of faith. The act of faith consists in assuming that the scientific view of the origin of life is correct, without having concrete evidence to support that belief."

Now that's honesty! This statement also tells us what went wrong. Now we know why Jastrow remains agnostic in religious matters. It is a question of faith. This scientist so believes in science that other beliefs are incompatible. He assumes that truth and knowledge come to us by way of the mind of man scientifically analyzing the facts at his disposal. He has chosen to believe that such scientific thinking is the way to truth and he has made the wrong choice. In spite of his claim to be agnostic in religious matters he has a religion after all.

In this he has company, for he sits along with many others in the shadow of Immanuel Kant. That old philosopher took his axe to the tree of knowledge and split the thing in two. Ever since a double shadow has been cast upon the thinking of many, including the philosopher, the scientist and even the theologian. On the one hand, you will see sitting in the shadow of the tree those who claim that truth comes through the examination of the facts by the mind of man. On the other hand, there is the modern notion that religious truth must be unconcerned with propositions and facts.

Rev. W. Kooienga is pastor of the Faith Community Christian Reformed Church of Wyckoff, N.J.

Our scientist, along with many others has chosen to live in the shadow of the scientific side of Kant's monstrous tree. Such people claim that the other half of the tree doesn't concern them because it has nothing to do with scientific thought. What can be truly known, must be known by the mind of man thinking scientifically. The rest is but pre-scientific, unscientific, religious, or mythical thinking. God, for example, cannot be the genuine concern of the scientist in the laboratory. The astronomer cannot point his telescope to the heavens and photograph God in the act of creation, and so he claims that he cannot know whether or not God exists. He cannot know whether God created the heavens and the earth. No one can truly know, because of the way we are supposed to know truth, only through scientific thought.

Like all other modern thinkers, Jastrow shows a deep inconsistency when he speaks of faith. Evolution is a truth, he claims, even though you cannot take it into the laboratory and demonstrate its validity. How can this scientist know that evolution is true? He believes it. Suddenly, he takes a jump to the other half of Kant's bifurcated tree of knowledge. There is a warning for us in that leap of his to the other side of the tree.

First we want to take a closer look at that second book, *Until the Sun Dies*. By means of this vehicle we travel from the so called moment of creation through the evolutionary past, into the present and on to the glorious future. If the scientist has a faith (he does), then here is a "bible" created to compliment that faith. It has a "Genesis", a history of salvation by the grace of natural selection, an expression of thanksgiving to our animal forebears whose struggles have produced us. It also presents an eschatology that looks to the heavens in hope of greeting some intelligent beings that may populate a planet circling a distant star.

Jastrow's books are interesting. Give him credit for communicating difficult concepts. I'd give him a high mark for honesty. The books can also serve a purpose for which they were never intended. They warn of the folly of taking one's place beneath the old Kantian theory of knowledge.

Who are these people we see when peering into the shadows? Here you see a man in black garb intently studying a shroud, purported to be the cloth in which the body of Jesus was wrapped. He spends his time and energy trying to prove that this is the cloth left in the empty tomb in the hope that modern man will accept this as some evidence that Jesus was raised from the dead. Over there you see men on an expedition to Mt. Ararat. For similar reasons they wish to prove that the ark really did exist and want to bring back some concrete evidence for the laboratory to support the truth of the Bible. Such proofs will not be heard. They have forgotten the Lord's parable which said, "If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead." That grey-haired professor with the scholarly stoop who brings his scientific standards to the scriptures re-

mains unconvinced. We hear him mumble that it is impossible to accept miracles. He too enjoys the shade of the ancient tree.

Of greater concern are the theologians who keep their cool in the "religious" side of Kant's tree. We are safe from the attacks of science, they are thinking. God's word must be divorced from facts and propositions and then no one can disprove the faith. Some say that it doesn't matter whether or not Jesus was actually raised from the tomb, you must believe it anyway for faith and fact are separate.

You will find people closer to your home and church trying to say the same thing, if only in timid ways at first. You hear, don't you, that the infallibility of God's word is no crucial matter since God speaks through His Word anyway. Or you may hear your friendly Reformed theologian on the skids try to argue for a concept of truth that is divorced from facts and propositions. Truth, well that's the faithfulness of God, they say. Let's not get propositions entangled with truth. Please stay out of the scientists' arena when you talk of religion, is another way to say it.

Jastrow's little books demonstrate that the theologian who wants to sit under the shade of the Kantian tree of split knowledge has no defense against an aggressive scientific approach to life. The scientist does not content himself with one side of the affair. We have seen how easily he leaps to his own faith conclusions. He too believes. And how viril and appealing is this faith which claims the authority of fact, proposition and science. How anemic and pale are the modern theologies of today beside our ruddy believer in science! Where, by contrast is the authority of the modern theologian, and of those imitators who wish to be modern at least in the little ways. Where, I ask, is the authority of one who has lost his grip on the Bible, and can no longer say with any real meaning, "God has spoken"?

It is past time that Christians in science, in theology, in the laboratory, in the seminary, and more importantly, I think, the Christian is astride the tractors on the laundry routes, or behind the desk, approach the Kantian tree of knowledge with the sharp toothed saw of revealed truth and cut it down. Has not the Creator through whom all things hold together, by whose principles nature functions, revealed Himself in the Bible, His Holy Word? Can people who know Him, who fellowship with Him through the scriptures, in whose heart the Spirit lives, endure a mad if modern division of thought? Can people who know the Savior's prayer, "Sanctify them in the truth, Thy word is truth," allow a divorce between fact and faith, science and religion? Will those in whose heart lives and abides that Counselor who leads to truth accept a framework of truth and knowledge alien to Him? The answer, I think, is plain. Those who know Him, who fellowship with Him through His word and Spirit, are called to see His truth in the world about us, to behold Him revealed in scripture, and to fearlessly say that God's truth includes propositions, beginning with "God is", Praise His holy name. ●

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## A PRAYER OF JOHN CALVIN

Grant, Almighty God, that as we are instructed by thy Spirit and armed by thy sacred teaching, we may carry on the war bravely with open enemies and with all who boldly oppose true religion. May we also constantly despise all domestic foes and apostates, and resist them manfully. May we never be disturbed, even if various tumults should arise in thy Church. May we fix our eyes upon thee, and always expect a happier issue than appears possible at the time, until a length thou shalt fulfill thy promises. And may all events which now seem contrary to us, issue in our salvation, when thy Son our Redeemer shall appear. — Amen

Prayer at the conclusion of Calvin's *Commentary* on Daniel 11:30.

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## AN ALARMING TREND

HENRY BAKER

I am writing a few articles on an alarming trend in the Christian Reformed Church. What is true in my Church is hardly different from what is happening in other denominations. There is not only a departure from the Faith of the Fathers, but also a serious deterioration in the observance of the standard of morals as defined by God's Word. These two usually go together. When the authority of the Scriptures is disputed and the new hermeneutics are used to accept or reject what the interpreter desires, that can be expected.

The immediate occasion for writing is a grieving reaction to the publication of movie reviews in *The Banner*. These are accompanied by a commendation of the movies that are considered tolerable. The reviewers are able to ignore the fact that the productions they recommend contain filthy language, are replete with curses, and portray violence and immoral behavior. They say their appreciation of the film arts makes that possible.

Who dared surmise that after the stand taken in 1928 by our Church, which was similar to that of all orthodox Churches, such a thing would happen?

Since the meeting of the Synod in 1966 the Christian Reformed Church, officially, no longer considers it sinful to attend secular movies, even though they contain flagrant language and portray gruesome violations of God's laws.

The Committee on "The Church and the Film Arts" reported in 1966. It stated, "The Christian

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*Rev. Henry Baker is a retired pastor and was for some time missionary-at-large for the CRC and lives in Grand Rapids, Michigan.*

must reject and abstain from the use of the film arts products which tolerate sin and propagate it as a normal aspect of human life in a way that does violence to the only valid explanation of life as declared in God's revelation of sin and redemption."

Did Synod accept that statement? No, it didn't. If it had, I would not have written this article. By its decision Synod virtually said, with respect to movie attendance you need not be deterred by the fact that it "tolerates sin or propagates it . . . portrays and interprets life in a way that does violence to the only valid explanation of life as declared in God's revelation of sin and redemption."

What did Synod do? It decided, "The Christian should reject and condemn the message (italics are mine H.B.) of those film arts products which sanction sin and subvert the Christian interpretation of life." That's all you have to do. Just reject and condemn the message. You can reject and condemn the message by yourself. You don't have to do that publicly. When people challenge your attendance, you can excuse the use of filth and curses by saying, that's the way of life.

How does this agree with the Word of God? Ephesians 5:3, 11, 12 reads, "But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed because these are improper for God's holy people. Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. For it is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret." NIV

That same Synod, speaking of "The Pastoral Task of the Church" says, "Those entrusted with the care of the flock must earnestly warn against the movie and television products which portray or promote a philosophy of life and a way of thinking that is contrary to the Christian way of life". How does that accord with "reject and condemn the message" of a movie?

Hollywood's world and life view may not be ours, and no Christian may be satisfied with a mere personal rejection of it. His convictions should forbid patronizing a business that makes shambles of the Biblical standards of morality. Lovers of art may have to deny themselves the privilege of viewing art productions, but is that too great a sacrifice for a follower of the Savior to make for the sake of Him who sacrificed all for us?

I appreciate the skills non-Christians have developed in arts, but that does not give me the right to subscribe to *Playboy* and similar magazines. A devout Christian will not think of supporting an industry that produces pornographic books and movies.

I know we have a cultural mandate. Education, business, entertainment, art, and every other sphere of life must be claimed as belonging to our Lord.

We know that Satan has laid claim on those spheres. He is the "prince of their world".

What must we do? Merely reject and condemn what Satan does? Or fight the battle of faith against him? May we be satisfied with doing nothing, and only deplore what is happening? ●

## WOULD YOU CALL THIS PRESBYTERIAN?

JOHN R. JACKSON

My copy of *The Banner* arrived today. As I often do, I took a couple of minutes to page through it, skimming those items which caught my eye. I was struck by the first letter in "Voices" (3/30/79 issue) in which the council of one of our churches informs the denomination that it "... endorse(s) the presbyterian form of church government and not the congregational form." Perhaps some will find this statement reassuring. I for one find it disturbing because of the insinuation it contains. Allow me to elaborate.

You will recall that several consistories have used the pages of *The Banner* to announce to the denomination that they do not consider the action of the 1978 Synod permitting the ordination of women to the office of deacon to be settled and binding. However, this letter from the council of a church in Grand Rapids begins by mimicking the words used by the protesting consistories. It then goes on to endorse Synod's decision and inform the denomination of the council's intention to implement that decision. Sandwiched between the endorsement of Synod's decision and the statement of intent to implement it is this paragraph:

We have attempted to live within the decisions of our Synod in the past and we shall do so in the future because we endorse the presbyterian form of church government and not the congregational form.

Although I strongly disagree with this council and with Synod's decision to permit the ordination of women to the office of deacon, I still respect those who disagree with me. Difference of opinion *per se* does not bother me. But I *am* irritated with the insinuation this consistory makes concerning those who, like myself, cannot accept the decision of

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Synod! This consistory is suggesting that those who oppose Synod's decision to permit ordination of women as deacons are by their opposition endorsing congregational church government instead of presbyterian church government.

I would be willing to shrug off this insinuation were it not for the fact that this charge is becoming fairly common among us lately. Anyone who has the nerve to question the decisions and policies of the denomination had better be prepared to have this accusation leveled at him. This charge of congregationalism is a convenient way of stifling dissent and impugning the motives of those who would call the church to account. But, like most labels, while it is handy, it is also misleading.

Congregational church government recognizes no ecclesiastical authority greater than the local church. Local churches may gather together to consider matters of common concern, but any decisions reached at such gatherings are merely advisory; they have no binding effect on the local church.

Presbyterian church government, by way of contrast, recognizes that, although the local church through its council possesses original authority, the local church delegates authority to the classis and synod to deal with certain matters of concern to the churches in common. Under this system, decisions of classis and synod are considered binding *unless contrary to the Word of God*. Note well that neither classis nor synod has an absolute authority over the local church.

I ask then, in the light of the above, am I a congregationalist because I question Synod's decision about women deacons? When I insist on substantial Biblical evidence before I go along with this radical change, am I denying Synod's authority? When I request that a hasty decision taken in the midst of general confusion and parliamentary irregularity be reconsidered, do I merit the title "congregationalist?" Since when is it contrary to presbyterian church order to be concerned with the effects of such a decision on the peace and unity of the church?

Those who oppose Synod's action to permit ordination of women deacons should not be intimidated by the empty charge that they are "congregationalists." They should rather be disturbed that more and more the denomination is attempting to place its own authority above God's Word! What form of church government is this? Surely not the presbyterian! Instead, it reminds one of the false Church which "... ascribe(s) more power and authority to itself and its ordinances than to the Word of God ..." (Belgic Confession, Art. XXIX)

It is a curious form of church government which allows Synod to make a decision based on extremely weak and questionable "grounds," and to then demand that opponents of such a decision accept the burden of proving to Synod that it is contrary to the Word. Any perceptive observer can see what "settled and binding" is coming to mean in the CRC: a decision is settled and binding IF the liberals approve of it! If *that's* what it means to be presbyterian, then perhaps I hold to a different system of church government after all. ●

# Enjoying the Blessed Knowledge of the Risen Christ

REV. JOHN BLANKESPOOR

**Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen.**

Luke 24:5, 6a

This is the day which the Lord has made. So spoke a psalmist in the Old Testament. This is the day which is sometimes called a feast day for the church. It is the day that speaks of victory. Without it all our believing would be in vain, says Paul. It is the beginning of the joy of a new life, even of the joy of heaven. This is the beginning of the entire new creation.

Now there is hope of being delivered from this vicious circle of death. Now we need not sorrow as those who have no hope when the grim reaper takes away believing dear ones from our side. Christ died and arose again, that is the message on the resurrection day. Because of this and the subsequent ascension and outpouring of the Spirit a "new order" is established in this old world. And Christians can sing a new song with a new "lease" on life, with new attitudes and new approaches and goals. If we live as Christians. And nothing, no nothing shall ever be able to put this hope to shame, or extinguish this new light of life. It is the risen Christ who has given us this hope.

Isn't it interesting that also angels enter "the picture" here again? How interested they are in the work of God! And we may conclude that they still have such keen interest in the church and individual Christians today. We see them in the fields of Ephratah, we read of them several times during the life of Christ on earth, also in Gethsemane and here again by the empty tomb. But isn't it remarkable that we see none of them at Pentecost?! There they apparently retreat into the background with all the attention being given to the mighty Spirit poured into the Church.

But angels are only servants. Christians are sons and daughters of God. And aren't children much more important than servants? In the book of Revelation we are told that the children of the Father will *sit* while angels will be *standing*, as servants. No wonder that we are encouraged to sing such beautiful songs on the day of the resurrection.

From death to life eternal, From earth  
unto the sky,  
Our Christ hath brought us over with  
hymns of victory.

Now let the heavens be joyful, let earth  
her song begin,  
Let all the world keep triumph, and all  
that is therein.

And also:

Life's pathway Thou wilt show, To Thy  
right hand wilt guide,  
Where *streams of pleasures* ever flow,  
and *boundless Joys* abide.

How much do we really sing these songs? Is the spirit of these songs with us in our *daily lives*? Of course, we know that all these things are true in some objective sense, also that God loves His people and promises all good to them because of the risen Savior. But doesn't life often seem vain, in spite of all these glorious truths? And aren't we often burdened with anxious care, groping in dark despair? The Lord Jesus surely knew what kind of lives we would be living when He encouraged us not to let our hearts be troubled. He knew they would be troubled. Where often is the joy of Easter? And how long will it stay with us after Easter day?

I'm so glad that the Bible is realistic as well as idealistic. It gives us also the accounts of the weak faith of the saints of that day. Not that this may ever be an excuse for weak faith. Christians, when speaking of weaknesses of faith, should never say, well, after all we're still human. That's no valid excuse before our faithful Father. But the accounts of weak faith do give us encouragement, and with them we are shown the way of faith.

On this Easter morning we see the Old Testament coming to the New Testament. The darkness of the Old Testament with all its centuries is past, and the dawn of the eternal day is coming. Is that perhaps why Jesus arose early in the morning, as it appears? Also at the empty tomb we see hopeless man, bewildered, confused and in great sorrow before the glorious risen Lord. Here is death standing before the great wonder of the resurrection. Look at those women, with spices to anoint the dead body of the Lord in their hands, standing before the mighty incredible wonder of the risen Lord. Never has there been a greater contrast! Never has there been a darker page in all of the Old Testament history!

There is also Mary Magdalene whose thoughts are no higher than that of a stolen body of her Savior. What kind of Savior is that? And she is "crying her heart out" because it is gone. She, too, is seeking the Living One, the very Lord of life, and the Prince of Life in the realm of the dead, of worms and corruption, and decay.

Another glimpse the Bible gives us when we look at the Emmaus travelers. Believers they are of course. But how upset they are. They have such a big problem. All their high hopes had been dashed to pieces, exactly *because* of the cross and the resurrection. How these rumors about the appearances of Christ disturb them. They just don't understand it all. It's all like the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle that just don't fit together. Neither do they come to the knowledge and joy of the resurrection.

And the disciples? Judas Iscariot of course is gone, dead. Peter likely is walking the streets

somewhere, alone and in great sorrow. If only he could relive that unforgettable night. But no, He is gone. It can never be "done over again". Thomas has given up all hope of any expectation of this "Jesus of Nazareth," and therefore has left the others. Why should they stay together? It's all over with. The others, Mark tells us, are mourning and weeping when the women bring them the first resurrection gospel. How discouraged they are! Is this the church of the New Testament that has entered into the fulfillment of the hopes and faith of Abraham, Moses, David and the thousands of others?

How must we explain all this? Interesting it also is that the world (the Jews) have remembered what Christ has said, that He would be rising from the grave. But the church, the very followers of Christ apparently have forgotten all about those words. Why? Surely words cannot describe their overwhelming grief and sorrow. The shock was simply too much for their faith. It appears that great sorrow, grief, disappointment and frustration "wipe out" their memories. This is true also today with people in similar circumstances.

But this doesn't answer all the questions, nor is this the final answer. The final answer to all these problems, of the saints of that day and also for those in similar circumstances in our day is the same: unbelief in one form or another. Never should we forget that faith, or the opposite (unbelief) can have great influence upon us psychologically and emotionally. And unbelief never attains to the resurrection. The resurrection is naturally a work of grace, a wonder of grace. It is a spiritual work, a miracle, which can be seen and enjoyed only by faith, never by mere reason or rationalization. Unbelief is always limited to the vicious circle of this life where everything finally is characterized by death.

Only faith in the Word brings us to the knowledge of the resurrection with all its joys and peace. And it is this that the followers of Christ of that day and we today often fail to exercise. Doesn't Christ rebuke the Emmaus travelers because they are *slow of heart* to believe the *Scriptures*? Later Jesus opened their understanding that they might *understand the Scriptures*. John also tells us that they knew not the *Scriptures* that He would rise again from the dead. Mark uses even stronger language telling us that Jesus upbraided the disciples because of their unbelief and hardness of heart because they believed not the account of the women.

All this tells us that faith in the Scriptures was the answer for them, and is the answer always. Even when we don't understand and "things just don't make any sense to our finite minds. Faith accepts and believes in the truth and power of the Word. It believes simply because it is God's Word. Faith believes all of the Bible, and not only that which we want to believe, or what happens to strike our attention. This faith must always feed itself on the riches of the Word, the work of an almighty God in His marvelous grace and faithfulness. That Word never fails. It speaks of God's work in the past and of what He will do in the future, pointing us to great truths beyond the grave and in the day of His return. The beginning of all this we see here at the

empty tomb. How rich that Word is and His promises.

O God, forgive me for all my lack of faith. Increase my faith every day, in meditating on the Word. ●

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## THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST THE NAMES OF OUR MEDIATOR

Jerome M. Julien

What's in a name? For most of us our name, though very precious, is little more than a tag we wear to distinguish us from someone else. Once, names meant something. Today their significance is lost. For instance, Bakers or Bakkers do not always have bakeries. They have book stores, furniture companies and they are physicians. Vander Ploegs have bakeries, preach and edit magazines but don't always have to do with plows, as their name suggests. Kuipers often do not make barrels or wooden tubs. They are engaged in other tasks. When we look up the meaning of our given names in the little guides published for that purpose we are sometimes disappointed or even embarrassed. They hardly say the truth about us. Names no longer are descriptive of a person, except incidently. Unless, of course, they are the nicknames we pick up from friends or enemies.

In Bible times names meant something. They were ways of explaining what something really was. Adam knew this and as he looked at each of the animals in the Garden of Eden he named them, thus expressing in a word what each animal really was. Each name told the true nature of the being.

Even the name of Adam is significant. It is the Hebrew word for "man" and may mean — if many etymologists are correct — "from the red ground". The other names in Scripture are significant, too. They say something definite about the person. Abraham means "father of a multitude". Isaac means "laughter". Isaiah means "salvations of Jehovah". These names were meaningful. They spoke loudly in one way or another of the ones who bore them.

Our Mediator is called by many names on the pages of Scripture. In fact, there are more than we

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can consider in the space of this article. Each name discloses the essence of the Mediator. No doubt His many names speak of His fullness and also of our inability to understand His greatness.

The Old Testament announces the Mediator by a number of names. Already in Genesis 3:15, He is the "Seed of the woman". Our Lord would call Himself the "Son of Man" in keeping with this first title given in Scripture. Isaiah spoke of Him as "Immanuel" (7:14) and the "Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace" (9:6). Zechariah spoke of "the Branch" (6:12), and in Malachi 3:1, He is the "Messenger of the Covenant". Each of these names, along with the other prophetic designations of the Mediator in the Old Testament, is a rich study in itself.

There are several names which we commonly use to speak of the Mediator: Jesus, Christ and Lord. Properly speaking, only the first is a name. The other two are titles. But since all three disclose the essence of the Mediator we consider them as THE NAMES OF THE MEDIATOR.

The given name — and it should be added, the God-given name of our Mediator is Jesus. In response to God's command to both Joseph and Mary (Matthew 1:21, Luke 1:31) the child born to Mary in Bethlehem was called Jesus (Luke 2:21). Though it was a common name, only He could really bear it. Literally, the names mean "Jehovah salvation"; and this is what God communicated to Joseph through the angel: "Thou shalt call his name JESUS; for it is he that shall save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21).

Already in the Old Testament there were men who bore this name in anticipation of His coming. Jesus is merely the Greek form of the Hebrew name Joshua.

Moses' place was taken by Joshua. It was his task to bring Israel into the promised land. Canaan was an emblem of that eternal rest promised by God. Joshua was an emblem, or a type, of the Mediator of the Covenant, Jesus (Hebrews 4:8,9).

Later in the history of the Old Testament we meet another Joshua. He was the High Priest at the time of the rebuilding of the Temple (Haggai 1:1, 2:4; Zechariah 3, 6:11). The outstanding point about this Joshua was that in Zechariah's night vision (ch. 3) he, as a representative of Israel, visibly portrayed the truth of justification — a Biblical truth at the heart of salvation. His filthy garments were replaced by clean, white garments.

The name Jesus is profoundly rich for the believer. It reminds us that salvation is of the Lord. He is the revelation of the God of our salvation. Through Him we know deliverance from sin because He paid our debt before God. Through Him we are called to life from death — a life which the believer knows now and will know fully in all eternity.

That name Jesus, given by God, was to express His purpose for coming. Is it any wonder that hymn-

writers and poets have written so meaningfully about it? John Newton wrote:

How sweet the Name of Jesus sounds  
In a believer's ear!  
It soothes his sorrows, heals his wounds,  
And drives away his fear.

Charles Wesley wrote:

Jesus! the Name that charms our fears,  
That bids our sorrows cease;  
'Tis music in the sinner's ears,  
'Tis life and health and peace.

The second designation given to the Mediator is Christ. This is an official name. It speaks of His task so that He would fulfill the purpose of His coming. "Christ" is the Greek form of the Hebrew title "Messiah" (John 1:41). Both "Christ" and "Messiah" refer to anointing.

Therefore, we understand His as "the Anointed One". This anointing refers to the Old Testament procedure of anointing with oil those set aside for a special task. Anointing was, in effect, ordination. Through it men were appointed to office (their God-given assignment), as were David and Elisha. By that anointing they were set apart in a special relationship. Further, that oil of anointing represented the Holy Spirit who was given in a special way in ordination (I Samuel 16:13).

As Christ, the Mediator was anointed from eternity as God's gracious Provision to effect the salvation of His eternal good pleasure. In history this anointing was seen to be a reality in His conception by the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:35) and in His reception of the Holy Spirit at the time of baptism (Matthew 3:16). By the Holy Spirit Christ was, qualified or made competent for the task given Him to do.

We also call the Mediator "Lord". This, too, was, and still is a common title. It can be used in a variety of ways: i.e., such as a polite address to one who is a superior or the expression of utter subjection. However, when the title "Lord" is used in relation to our Mediator, it always carries with it an emphasis on Christ's power and authority. For instance, much more than polite address is implied in Matthew 8:2 or 20:33. Whether Jesus is called Lord as teacher, as the One at God's right hand or as the One who lacks nothing of the Divine glory, it always means that His is sovereign authority.

This title understood in this way, when it is applied to our Mediator, is the name that is above every name (Philippians 2:9-11). For that reason the angels at Bethlehem said, "There is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:11).

The *Heidelberg Catechism* reminds Christians that the Mediator is our Lord and sovereign owner (q. 34) for "... He has redeemed us, body and soul, from all our sins, not with gold or silver, but with His precious blood, and has delivered us from all the power of th devil, and has made us His own possession". ●

# WOMEN OFFICERS — DESPITE THE BIBLE

JELLE TUININGA

Anyone who is not a stranger in Jerusalem nowadays realizes that on the part of a very vocal minority in the CRC there is a great deal of pressure to get women into ecclesiastical office. Of course, for the present it is largely limited to the office of deacon(ess), a request which the Rev. Bill Deenick of Australia called "a modest enough (though sometimes tongue-in-cheek) request." "But," he goes on to say, "it never stops there. It has never stopped there and it never will. It could not, since the arguments in favour of women in the one office can be used in favour of women in the other offices with very little alteration" (in *Trowel & Sword*). Deenick is right of course.

One of the churches in the Classis to which I belong already has a woman deaconess. But contrary to the decision of Synod, the elder from this church openly stated that this deaconess sits in on all the council meetings and takes part in all the deliberations and decisions. That shows something of the mentality in our church today. We really don't care too much what Synod says, as long as we have the opening. Once that is there, the rest will follow. Every one does that which is right in his own eyes. And that is going to bring about a very strange situation in our churches, not to speak of chaos.

Of course, Synod's decision itself leaves a lot to be desired. For Synod has actually now created a "hierarchy" among the offices, something which goes contrary to the very genius of Reformed church polity. We have emptied the diaconal office of any kind of biblical authority. With such a decision we can expect problems to arise. That's what we get when we try to compromise biblical givens in order somehow to accommodate a pressure group within the church.

One other thing ought to be said in this connection: As one who is opposed to women in office, I sometimes have to hear from some well-meaning, oh-so-condescending brothers (and sisters): "We can more or less understand your view, for it takes time to get used to something we haven't had before." As if that was the issue! Some people "get used" to adultery and divorce and homosexuality too. Does that make it right? Is it only a matter of "getting used" to it? What a bunch of nonsense.

It's a matter of what does the Bible say. And so far the best we've been able to come up with is that there is "some" evidence for deaconesses. And on women elders we don't know, for Scripture is "not clear." But we're going to make sure we get them anyway. In this respect it's interesting to note what the 1975 Committee said of the 1973 Report (the Report which tried hardest to find biblical evidence for women in office): "The committee fails to prove that women participate officially at all." Again: "The committee has not given a single example of women called to official leadership. In fact, we can find no clear example in the New Testament." That is at

least honest talk. And that's where we still are today. No one has come up with any more evidence since that. But then, biblical evidence is not the deciding factor in this (and other) matters. It's more a matter of what we *want*. ●

## EVANGELICALS AND INERRANCY

Donald MacLeod

We are indebted to Rev. Donald MacLeod and the *Monthly Record of the Free Church of Scotland* of which he is the editor, for this superb analysis and answer to current attacks on the inerrancy of the Bible in traditionally evangelical Christian circles. He answers exactly the objections also raised in the CRC against the Bible's inerrancy: (1) "the humanness" of the Bible, (2) the futile attempts to distinguish revelational from non-revelational Scripture, and (3) the appeal to the "phenomena" of the Bible in effort to contradict the teachings of the Bible and the Lord. Reprinted by permission from the Dec. 1978 *Monthly Record*.

For long enough now it has been commonplace among main-stream Protestant theologians to deny the inerrancy of the Bible. In fact, they are not content merely to deny it. They must deny it almost as vehemently as Peter did His Lord, with cursing and swearing, as if even to entertain the thought cast grave doubts on one's sanity. For example, C.H. Dodd, referring to the evangelical doctrine of inspiration (and having, incidentally, mis-stated it) goes on to say, "Any attempt to confront this theory of inspiration with the actual facts which meet us in the study of the biblical documents leads at once to such patent confusions and contradictions that it is unprofitable to discuss it." And Karl Barth seems almost to glory in what he sees as the fallibility of Scripture, asserting that "the vulnerability of the Bible, that is, its capacity for error, also extends to its religious or theological content". In fact to Barth it is the essence of the miracle of revelation that sinful and erring men speak the Word of God in fallible human words: "If God was not ashamed of the fallibility of all the human words of the Bible, of their historical and scientific inaccuracies, their theological contradictions, the uncertainty of their tradition, and, above all, their Judaism, hut adopted and made use of these expressions in all their fallibility, we do not need to be ashamed when He wills to renew it to us in all its fallibility as witness, and it is mere self-will and disobedience to try to find some infallible elements in the Bible."

## Evangelical Denials of Inerrancy

From such quarters, these remarks are predictable enough. It is very much more disturbing, however, to find denials of inerrancy coming from men who, until recently, were confidently regarded as evangelicals. Not that it is altogether new that some who have a relatively high view of inspiration should yet be reluctant to declare that the Bible is inerrant. This was the position of James Orr, who warned us to guard against "any overstressed theory of inerrancy in historical detail" and held that the Bible itself did not claim, nor did inspiration necessitate, an errorless record in matters of detail. This is the position now being advocated by an increasing number of evangelicals, a trend which is fairly fully documented in Harold Lindsell's book, *The Battle for the Bible*. We say "fairly fully" because Lindsell offers no evaluation of such British scholars as F.F. Bruce, Howard Marshall and R.P. Martin whose unqualified acceptance of radical critical procedure is now arousing widespread concern.

Lindsell's immediate concern is with the situation at Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, California, which recently amended its doctrinal basis so as to allow men who do not believe in inerrancy to serve on the faculty. Daniel Fuller, son of the founder of the Seminary, is in fact typical of this kind of evangelical thinking. Professing to be thoroughly loyal to the doctrine of Scripture held by B.B. Warfield he goes on to propose that we must modify Warfield by distinguishing within Scripture between what is revelational and what is non-revelational. The revelational, according to Fuller, deals with the salvation. The non-revelational deals with such subjects as botany, palaeontology and cosmology. Revelational Scripture is wholly without error. Non-revelational is not, because in this area inspiration involved accommodation to the views of the original readers. George E. Ladd and Paul Jewett hold views identical with those of Fuller.

The abandonment of inerrancy is even more marked at the Free University of Amsterdam, famed for its associations with Abraham Kuyper and Hermann Bavinck and, until recently, a bastion of Calvinistic orthodoxy. It is probably fair to say that in the last few decades the primary concern of the faculty of the Free University has been with academic respectability and the attitude towards contemporary deviations from historical orthodoxy has become more and more conciliatory. The evolution is epitomized in G.K. Berkouwer, who, at a meeting of the Synod of the Reformed Church some years ago, asked: "Is there room in the Reformed Churches for persons — and I reckon myself among them — who at this stage of their reflection have great hesitations concerning the historicity of Adam?" But Berkouwer's colleague, H.M. Kuitert is much more explicit. He declares that there are historical discrepancies in Scripture and holds that some things are reported in the Bible that did not happen the way they are told. He does not regard Genesis 1-11 as real history; Adam and Eve were not a literal and historical pair of people; and nothing is

lost if we read the story of Jonah as fiction and not as history.

The interesting thing is not that such remarks are being made. By comparison with the fulminations of non-evangelical scholars like Briggs, Dodd, Barth and Barr, such statements are mild and almost reverent. What is disquieting is that these comments come from men who have been known as evangelicals and who see no reason why they should cease to be regarded as evangelicals merely because they no longer believe in biblical inerrancy.

It would be wrong, however, to dismiss this new evangelicalism without making some effort to understand its origins, because these men have not altered their position without reason. There are certain factors which, to *their* minds at least, make belief in inerrancy impossible.

## The Humanness of the Bible

They argue, first of all, that fallibility follows inevitably from the humanness of the Bible. If the words are spoken by fallible men, then they must be fallible because every product of man is sinful and errant. But this argument runs into two difficulties.

First, it forgets that there is nothing in the Scripture which is merely human without being, at the same time, divine. Every Scripture is God-breathed (2 Tim. 3:16); and, conversely, no prophecy of the Scriptures is a matter of private interpretation, personal views or individual initiative (2 Pet. 1:20 f.). In the production of the Scriptures there is such a concurrence of the divine with the human that at every point it is true not only that *men* spoke but that *God* carried them (2 Pet. 1:21).

Secondly, as Professor Murray pointed out in his valuable contribution to the symposium, *The Infallible Word*, this argument proves too much. If human fallibility absolutely precludes an infallible Scripture, we cannot have a single Scripture — not even one verse — which is inerrant. Every Scripture comes through human instrumentality and no passage — even the most spiritual — can be immune. The fallibility must affect not only those scriptures which deal with historical or scientific fact but equally those which deal with fundamental redemptive truth. On the other hand, if divine influence could assert itself at some points and suspend the operation of human fallibility when "spiritual truth" was being asserted, it is difficult to see why the same influence could not preclude error on less important matters. "Human fallibility," concludes Professor Murray, "cannot be pleaded as an argument for the fallibility of Scripture unless the position is taken that we do not have in the Scriptures content of any kind that is not marred by the frailty of human nature." Curiously enough, Barth is quite happy to accept this paradoxical conclusion: "To the bold postulate, that if their word is to be the Word of God they must be inerrant in every word, we oppose the even bolder assertion, that they can be at fault in any word, *and have been at fault in every word*, and yet they have still spoken the Word of God in their fallible and erring human word." But this is surely to be deceived by one's own eloquence.

## Revelational and Non-revelational Scripture

The second factor which has led these evangelicals to deny the doctrine of inerrancy is the view already referred to that it is possible to distinguish between Scripture which is revelational and Scripture which is not revelational. This distinction itself can be defined in two slightly different ways. We may, in the first place, say that what the author *intended* to say — the message he is consciously delivering — is revelation, while what is non-intentional is not revelation but merely part of the scaffolding. For example, the intention of the first three chapters of Genesis is to teach the theological doctrine of creation, and any biology or geology which may be introduced is nonintentional and simply reflects the point of view of the writer's contemporaries. Similarly, Christ intended only to teach the doctrines of the kingdom, and such remarks as He may have made on questions like the inerrancy of the Scripture and the authorship of certain books of the Old Testament were non-intentional and beyond the scope of His ministry. He, again, was simply acquiescing in the views of His contemporaries.

The trouble with this, at the most obvious level, is that there is every reason to believe that the writers of Scripture intended as their message those very details which the new evangelicals find unacceptable. There is no reason to believe that the six-day creation or the real, literal existence of Adam and Eve, were the framework rather than the content of the Genesis message. Similarly, the historical details of the patriarchal narratives were precisely what their writers intended to emphasize.

On another level, it is plain, as a matter of principle, that we cannot confine revelation to what the biblical author intended to say. Take, for example, our Lord's argument in Mt. 22:31-32: "But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read what was spoken to you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living." It is very difficult to believe that it was the intention of the author of Genesis to teach at that point the doctrine of the resurrection. It is merely implicit in the language he uses. Yet the Lord accepts it as revelation. The principle involved here is stated very clearly by Peter when he tells us that the prophets enquired diligently what the spirit meant when He testified through them of the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow (I Pet. 1:10 f.). The apostle clearly did not believe that we could confine the revelation given in the Old Testament to what the writers consciously intended to say. Much of their message was far beyond even their own comprehension.

The other way of defining the difference between revelational and non-revelational Scripture is to distinguish between those parts which give the knowledge that makes men wise unto salvation and those which deal with matters of mere historical and scientific fact. But this, again, will not work. For one thing, it implies a doctrine of partial inspiration:

those Scriptures which intrude into the areas of chronology and palaeontology are not inspired. How can this fit into the apostolic view that *no* Scripture is a matter of private interpretation and that *every* Scripture is God-breathed? Furthermore, it is impossible in practice to draw this distinction between matters of theology on the one hand, and matters of science and history on the other. Where does cosmology end and theology begin in Genesis One? And is the historicity of Adam, of Abraham and of the Exodus a matter of mere history and not of theology? Even more, is the empty tomb a matter of history or a matter of doctrine? Beyond this still, what confidence in the Scriptures can men retain by this procedure? If we find the Scriptures to be in error where we can check them against the knowledge available to us from other sources, what confidence can we have in them when they speak of matters on which we can apply no check? If they are fallible when they speak to us of earthly things, it seems absurd to have implicit trust in them when they speak of heavenly things.

## The Phenomena of Scripture

Which reminds us of the third and probably the most important reason for the rejection of inerrancy — the alleged phenomena of Scripture. These phenomena include inconsistencies and discrepancies between different accounts of one event; the literary form of some parts of the Bible; the way the New Testament quotes the Old; the way reports of our Lord's words vary so much in the different Gospels; and the way biblical statements contradict the conclusions of modern science.

The intriguing thing here is the complete change in evangelical procedure which this capitulation to the phenomena represents. Some of the characteristics of the Scriptures have always constituted a difficulty for our doctrine of inspiration, and it is forlorn to wish it were otherwise. Advancing knowledge will solve some of the problems and create some more, probably in equal proportions. But in the past, evangelicals have allowed their belief in inerrancy and their awareness of these difficulties to exist side by side. The new attitude is not due to any sudden mushrooming of the discrepancies, but to the fact that these evangelicals have completely revised their view of the relative importance of two separate strands of evidence: What the alleged phenomena of Scripture say about it, on the one hand; and what Christ says about it on the other. They have decided that the phenomena must take precedence over the witness of the Lord. In a word, they have decided, as non-Evangelicals did long ago, that Christ was wrong about the Bible.

Let us be clear as to the extent of our Lord's error, if the new evangelical point of view is correct. He failed to detect the chronological, palaeontological and biological blunders in the Bible. He failed to detect the clear evidences of late date and composite authorship with regard to the Pentateuch and Isaiah. All that is grave enough. What is infinitely more serious, however, is that He completely failed to detect the religious, theological and even

moral errors which are so painfully obvious to men like Barth. Is He still the way, the truth and the life? Or shall we now go on to revise not only our doctrine of Scripture but also our doctrine of Christ, in order to accommodate our new discovery: the religious, theological and moral fallibility of the Saviour?

Non-Evangelicals have lived happily with a fallible Christ for decades and, despite their protest to the contrary, the authority which He now exercises even over their theology is minimal. As Edward Norman pointed out in the first of his recent Reith Lectures, the distinctive content of Christianity has been drained away and secular idealism put in its place. The traditional hall-mark of evangelicals, on the other hand, has been implicit submission to the authority of Christ. It is that hall-mark which Fuller, Berkouwer, Kuitert and their colleagues no longer bear.

## MOTHER'S DAY THOUGHT

*Mother in glory —  
A wonderful thought!  
Great is the work  
That the Savior has wrought!  
Risen from death  
He has gone to prepare  
Mansions in glory  
His children may share.*

*Mother in glory —  
We miss her today —  
Others are sending  
Good wishes their way;  
God's heavenly gift  
Forever the best,  
Mother in glory  
Enjoying sweet rest.*

*Mother in glory —  
Our hearts long and yearn  
Waiting for our  
Blessed Savior's return.  
Soon He shall come  
Upon clouds in the air;  
Mother and children  
In glory shall share.*

Annetta Jansen  
Dorr, Michigan

## SECESSION: SIN OR CHRISTIAN DUTY?

PETER DE JONG

### A Recurring Question

A half year ago in our September issue (p. 14) I observed that developments within our denomination are compelling a lot of loyal church members to face the question whether they should remain in it or become part of a Bible-believing, confessionally Reformed church outside of it. The decision last year to admit women to the office of deacon is only the last of a series of official actions which disregard the Bible, the creeds and the church order and, in fact, are thereby destroying the bonds which hold us together as a denomination. In that situation, many, be it reluctantly, are compelled to ask whether the Lord would have them continue, often, it seems, unsuccessfully, to oppose this policy within the mother church, or leave it to seek church fellowship in a new or other church body in which they can conscientiously have a part and whose policies they can support.

### Discussion in Renewal: Dr. James De Jong

This question was the subject of an unusually frank discussion in the January 15 (and an earlier) issue of the *Renewal* magazine in Sioux Center, Iowa.

Dort College professor, James A. De Jong, disturbed by talk of secession, raised the issue. "When does a church reach such an intolerable degree of apostasy, indifference, or flagrant doctrinal deviance that it becomes impossible for a faithful, Bible-believing Christian to remain identified with it?" He observed that (1) "Christians must distinguish between core or essential ingredients of the faith and those that are secondary." (2) Although the "authority of Scripture" is essential in a Protestant creed, one does not need to split churches over exegetical differences, and (3) that it is not true that churches once going astray cannot be Reformed, as various reformations and revivals demonstrate. (4) In his opinion neither the Scripture nor the example of the Reformers permit schism or withdrawal from a church because of its errors. (5) He suggested that one must stress the good in the church not its weaknesses, lest he be guilty of raising "discord, sects and mutiny." Subsequently he stated, "I find it pastorally ill-advised to breach the subject of separation within the context of any current issues in the Christian Reformed Church." He considered raising "that issue in the current... debates and discussions might well be the most serious doctrinal deviation of all."

### J. Tuininga's Reply

A reaction to his view came from Rev. Jelle Tuininga (from Lethbridge, Alberta), who is familiar to readers of the *OUTLOOK*. Although he made it

plain that he shared De Jong's warning against a separatistic or divisive attitude — "One must always strive for genuine Reformation and healing by being obedient to God's Word and the Reformed standards, by being faithful where we are . . ." — he felt that De Jong's writing had been "somewhat one-sided", tending "to overlook somewhat the serious nature of doctrinal deviation . . . and the serious duty of every office-bearer and member 'to exert himself in keeping the Church free from such errors.'" "And we may not avoid that often unpleasant task by accentuating the positive to the neglect of the negative. We may not lull ourselves to sleep by pointing out all of the good things that remain."

"Dr. De Jong went so far as to say that we ought not to separate ourselves from an apostatizing church, but must wait until we are expelled . . . I beg to differ here. The Belgic Confession bids us 'diligently and circumspectly to discern from the Word of God which is the true Church,' and 'to separate themselves from all those who do not belong to the Church,' including sects 'that call themselves the Church.' It is no easy matter to say just where the line must be drawn, and that may vary from congregation to congregation and from individual to individual. In the final analysis that is a matter of one's Christian conscience before God. But the Reformed churches have always upheld the right and duty of believers to secede from a 'church' when it no longer manifests clearly the marks of the true church, difficult and heart-breaking as that decision may be in the existing circumstances. 'Our Testimony' which was published . . . not long ago, states that when the call to reformation and renewal goes unheeded, 'then true believers are obligated for the sake of Christ's honor to separate themselves from such a company which will not correct its doctrine or pattern of life according to God's Word.' That is a clear biblical demand."

### The Bible Teaching on Separation

In agreement with Tuininga's observations, we ought to notice that it is not true that the Bible does not justify separation unless one is expelled from a church. The Apostle Paul separated himself and the believers from the synagogues in which he had been meeting and preaching when they opposed the gospel (Acts 18:6,7; 19:9). The Bible tells us to "have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them" (Eph. 5:11). It commands us "in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ" to "withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition" received from the apostles (2 Thess. 3:6).

### John Calvin's View

The views of Reformers such as John Calvin on this matter have been widely misunderstood and misapplied. His views were clearly stated in his *Institutes*. Although he "would not support even the slightest errors", He was also convinced that "we must not forsake the church because of any petty

dissensions". He stressed the need to distinguish between fundamental doctrines "so necessary to know that they should be certain and unquestioned by all men as the proper principles of religion" and "other articles of doctrine disputed which still do not break the unity of faith" (IV, I,12). He insisted that one must separate from the "corrupted church" of the papacy. "If anyone recognizes the present congregations — contaminated with idolatry, superstition and ungodly doctrine — as churches (in full communion of which a Christian man must stand — even to the point of agreeing in doctrine), he will greatly err. For if they are churches the power of the keys is in their hands; but the keys have an indissoluble bond with the Word, which has been destroyed from among them" (IV, II,10). Although there were still Christians in that institution it could no longer be considered a true church.

### Pressure to Tolerate Error

Currently within our churches we are being urged, if we cannot personally accept various views and practices which are in conflict with the Bible, the creeds and the church order, at least to *tolerate* such errors on the part of others within the church and its leadership. There must be more freedom to differ and more room for conflicting opinions and practices, we are told. The trouble is that the differences which we are being urged to tolerate are not the "petty dissensions" Calvin talked about. They concern the basis of our faith: Is the Bible the decisive guide to our faith and life or is it not? Do we believe in God who "worketh all things after the counsel of his will" (Eph. 1:11), or do we believe in a non-sovereign, essentially pagan god who does not? These are the kinds of issues that are really being raised among us and we are being pressed to tolerate differing opinions about them. If we give in to that pressure we are really agreeing to be part of a church which is being reduced to a mere debating society in which truth and error have equal standing; instead of being "the pillar and ground of the truth which the Bible says the Lord's church must be (1 Tim. 3:15). The church which refuses to distinguish between truth and error has already in principle surrendered to the devil whether or not it is still willing to tolerate a few inoffensive conservative preachers who may be useful to help it retain a conservative image.

May anyone who really loves the Lord and His gospel permit himself to be so used to support an evil cause?

Concern not only for ourselves, but also for our children, who must be guided and guarded as far as we are able from stumbling (Mat. 18:6), compels us to consider not only our immediate congregational environment but also the direction which the churches' training of our children and of their leaders is charting for the future. The Lord plainly instructed us that faithfulness to His covenant revelation and promise commits us to separation from whatever opposes it. "Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship have righteousness and iniquity? Or what communion hath light with darkness . . . or what portion hath a believer with an

unbeliever? And what agreement hath a temple of God with idols?" "Wherefore come ye out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord" (2 Cor. 6:14-7:1)

We need to work and pray for reform and not discount the possibility that the Lord may give that — as He has recently given it in a large degree among the Missouri Lutherans. We must also face the fact that He also lead us to renewed Bible-believing and confessing church fellowship and service by route of succession as He has recently done with many Presbyterians and did with our forefathers.

### "Speaking Truth in Love"

As our problems multiply and decisions have to be made there will probably be differences of opinion between people equally committed to the Lord and

His gospel which will lead some to take one course and others for the present to hold to the other . . . If that occurs we may well learn an important lesson from the Presbyterians who have organized the PCA denomination. They deliberately sought to avoid misunderstandings and hostilities between those who seceded earlier and those who for a time felt conscience-bound to continue to struggle for the faith in the old church. This biblical policy of seeking to "speak the truth in love" in these difficult situations has encouraged the rapid growth of the new denomination committed to the Biblical, Reformed faith. Let us together pray that the Lord may guide us also in His way of Reformation. ●

billions of years for the formation of geological strata and fossils. Geological strata with their fossil contents constitute the very heart of the evolutionary case.

Therefore the crux of the debate relative to evolutionism and creationism centers about the reliability of fossil evidence. To be sure, large beds of dinosaur skeletons have been found in New Mexico, Wyoming, Alberta, Belgium and on every continent of the world. Fossil beds of elephants, hippopotamus, amphibians, and plants have been discovered. Were these fossil beds formed by uniformitarianism? Or catastrophism?

The author states and understandably so that fossils must be formed rapidly or else the forces of erosion, bacterial decay, weathering, or other disintegrating processes will destroy them before the fossilization process is complete. This is a powerful argument against uniformitarianism and in favor of catastrophism (floods, earthquakes, volcanoes, storms, etc.) For the same reason rock strata containing fossils must also have been formed rapidly. All this refutes decisively the claim that rock strata and fossils were in the process of formation over long periods of years. Since dinosaur bones and skeletons are found on every continent, it would appear that catastrophe was a world wide phenomenon, either by the changing of the climate or the Genesis Flood. This is just one example among many others to indicate how the author maintains that the creation model provides a far better correlation for facts than the evolution model.

As far as the actual fossil evidence is concerned, man has always been man, and the ape has always been an ape. There are no intermediate or transitional forms leading to man or even up to the apes. There are no transitional forms between any of the other basic kinds of animals in the fossil record. There are large gaps between one species and another. No evidence has been found to prove that one species developed into another. There are no fossil evidences of the states through

which the assumed change took place from reptile to bird. There is not the slightest scientific evidence that life came from non-life. The author states that thousands of scientists and other educated intellectuals reject evolutionism. This would not be the case if evolution were as obvious as many scientists say it is.

Evolutionists have always maintained that the existence of dinosaur fossils proves pre-historic existence ages before man appeared on the scene. However, in central Texas limestone beds contain both dinosaur and human footprints. This discovery has been conclusively documented by on-the-site, at-the-time motion pictures. Thus dinosaurs and human beings lived at the same time. Furthermore, no transitional stages in the development of dinosaurs have been discovered. All this argues for creationism, rather than evolutionism.

Many scientists had hoped that the lunar landings would show how the solar system evolved and that this would also provide evidence that life evolved on other planets besides the earth. But all previous theories of the evolution of the solar system had to be abandoned, when it was discovered that the chemical makeup of the moon rocks was distinctly different from the rocks of the earth.

Many people believe that the age of rocks is determined by the study of their radioactive minerals — uranium, thorium, potassium, rubidium, etc. However, there are so many sources of possible error or misinterpretation in radiometric dating that most such dates are being discarded and never used at all, notably whenever they disagree with the previously agreed on dates.

In spite of all this, some Christians teaching in our Christian schools on the primary and secondary level, still believe that the creation days represent geological ages. The author states that, in accepting geological ages, they are implicitly accepting the evolutionary system. Geological ages are a must for uniformitarian processes. The only real assurance men have

## A LOOK AT BOOKS

**SCIENTIFIC CREATIONISM**, edited by Henry M. Morris, Ph.D. Published by Creation-Life Publishers, San Diego, California, 92115; 277 pages; \$4.95. Reviewed by Rev. C. Van Schouwen.

Dr. H.M. Morris, director of the Institute for Creation Research, headed a team of twenty-five scientists to produce this monumental book. Considering the fact that practically every "ism", including communism, humanism, libertinism, behaviorism, and even situational ethics, and the new hermeneutics is basically rooted in the implications of evolutionism, it becomes obvious how important it is to indicate that there is no real scientific proof for the evolutionary hypothesis. On the other hand, it is also necessary to establish special revelation, on a Biblical and scientific basis, as the only true foundation of all knowledge. This is the purpose of this book.

The author compares two models — the creation model and the evolution model — and indicates that the creation model, supplemented by the cataclysmic model, fits all the real facts of every field of science with a far better degree of correlation than the evolution model. This is the methodology of the book. Objections to the creation model are philosophical and not scientific.

Evolutionism based upon the precepts of uniformitarianism — the development from the simple to the complex — demands

for geological ages is the assumption of evolution, which cannot be scientifically validated.

Even those who deliberately reject the evolutionary implications of the geological ages, still face the massive problem of explaining why God chose to use billions of years of chance variations, natural selection, geological upheavals, storm, disease, extinction, struggle, suffering and death, as a prelude to the creation of man. Consequently, the day-age theory in any form is unacceptable Biblically, scientifically and theologically.

Many of the textbooks used in our Christian high schools and colleges are normed by the evolutionary hypothesis. School libraries are full of such books. The use of such books can do considerable damage to the faith concepts of students, unless the teacher is fully able to refute the presuppositions of evolutionism theologically and scientifically. Only those teachers, who are able to do so, should be appointed to a posi-

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*There is no frigate like a book  
To take us lands away,  
Nor any coursers like a page  
Of prancing poetry.*

*This traverse may the poorest take  
Without oppress of toll;  
How frugal is the chariot  
That bears the human soul!*

Emily Dickinson (1830-1886)

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tion on the teaching staff of our Christian schools. The purpose of this book is to equip the teacher to treat all of the important aspects of the subject of origin and to do this on a scientific basis. This book will help to restore confidence in special creation, as the true explanation of the origin and meaning of the world. It is written in laymen's language.

In these days of apostasy, biblical liberalism, higher criticism, and the new hermeneutics, the church should launch an all-out attack upon the forces of unbelief.

One of the most effective ways to accomplish this is to destroy the soil in which these departures from the Word of God are rooted. If we begin with anything other than the Sovereign God, Creator of the heavens and the earth, the end will be the destruction of Christian theology and the deterioration of Christian life. We must popularize the fantastic story of creation and its implications for all of life. We must show up evolutionism for what it actually is and what it has done and is doing to the moral and spiritual condition of the world today.

All ministers of the gospel, teachers, and professors of our Christian schools, on the primary and secondary level, should read this book. A copy should be placed in every church and school library, and used as a textbook in our Christian high schools and colleges. The study of this book would be a very fine project for any Bible study group. We are happy to ascertain that the Institute for Creation Research is preparing books on this subject for grade school children. Such books are filling a crucial gap in the curriculum structure of our Christian schools.

The last chapter of this book is exclusively devoted to explain the first eleven chapters of the Genesis record in harmony with all of Scripture. The author believes in the inerrancy of Scripture and therefore in the 24-hour days of the creation-week.

**THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES ON CHURCH GROWTH**, by Harvie M. Conn, Editor. Reviewed by Rev. John G. Van Ryn.

Through the efforts of Dr. Donald McGavran and others of the School of World Mission at Fuller Seminary, Church Growth has become the focus of much attention in mission circles. Terms such as "winnable people," "homogeneity," "people movements" have become common. In March, 1975 over 50 people gathered at Westminster Seminary for a consultation on Reformed Mission and the Theology of Church Growth. This book is a product of that consultation. Whereas it does not provide an in-depth critique of Church Growth theology, it does provide some insights into this theology. These insights are given by several of our Reformed men including E. P. Clowney, J. I. Packer, R. Recker, J. M.

L. Young, R. S. Greenway and A. F. Glasser as well as Dr. Conn. All of the contributors reflect their Reformed commitment by their confidence in the sovereign God who is building His church, extending His kingdom and saving His people. They also emphasize that this sovereign God holds us responsible to work wisely. This book is recommended to those who are concerned for the progress of missions and the growth of the church.

**THE GLORY WOODS**, by Virginia Greer; published by Christian Herald House, 40 Overlook Drive, Chappaqua, New York 10514. Publication date: April 30, 1976, hardbound, \$5.95. Reviewed by Dena Korfker.

"The Glory Woods" is sub-titled "A Hymn of Healing." It could also be called "A Hymn of Discovery." For Mrs. Greer discovered many things in her "Glory Woods."

Mrs. Greer spent most of her married life in the city, in Mobile, Alabama. She raised her family there and was very active in her church (Baptist). She was also a career-woman. She was a writer and a journalist. Her first book, *Give Them Their Dignity* dealt with teaching teens in church school. Five years of reporting as an editor for the *Mobile Press Register* won her three major awards, and her articles appeared in over thirty newspapers and magazines.

Coming to live in the deep woods of Alabama, twelve miles from the city, was indeed a discovery for Mrs. Greer. Her husband had always been an outdoor man, and with him as teacher, she is soon overwhelmed by the discovery of how God reveals Himself in His creation. She rejoices in all the small forest creatures who come to visit her, she finds herself making friends with and talking to them.

Suddenly her wonderful, new life is shattered by the appearance of cancer with its surgery and all its aftermath, and the possibility of death. In all the glory of her autumn woods she learns to face her problems, and she discovers the great joy of God's bountiful grace in His superb handiwork and in the Christian love of family and friends. She considered God's greatest miracle to be the fact of her complete acceptance of His way in her life.

Read it. You will enjoy it and be inspired.