

THE OUTLOOK

DEVOTED TO THE EXPOSITION AND DEFENSE OF THE REFORMED FAITH

JUNE 1981



**A NEW SEMINARY
SYNOD AGENDA
BIBLICAL CRITICISM AT CALVIN**

A New Reformed Seminary

An event that may prove to be important in our Reformed circles was the decision made on April 21, 1981 to organize a society to establish a new Reformed theological seminary. The decision was made at a meeting held at the Airport Hilton Hotel at O'Hare Airport at Chicago. The Tuesday afternoon, three-hour meeting was attended by about 70 people from various parts of the country, over two-thirds of them laymen.

It is no secret that many in as well as outside of the Christian Reformed churches have long been deeply concerned about the increasing confusion of doctrine and morals in the churches. It is also becoming evident to many that this confusion is both being reflected in and is being increased by the kind of training which ministers have been receiving for the ministry. Especially young ministers and students can testify to that. About a year and a half ago a group of ministers in Northwest Iowa, some of whom were involved in formulating "Our Testimony" which was circulated by the Reformed Fellowship about two years ago, began discussions about what could be done to get better Reformed training for preachers in the church. Out of those discussions there arose the idea of seeking to estab-

lish a new seminary forthrightly committed to the Reformed faith but independent of ecclesiastical control. Is such a project legitimate? The Free University of Amsterdam, where many of our Dutch ministers have been trained and many others have obtained advanced degrees, is just such a school and so is Westminster Theological Seminary, which our synods have been recommending to our churches for their support for decades. Is there sufficient need for beginning such a school? Is establishing one feasible? Would there be sufficient interest and support to begin one? If so, where should it be located? Many were the questions that could be and were raised.

On January 30 at a larger informal meeting of mostly ministers at Davenport, Iowa, the idea was further discussed and more suggestions and alternatives were considered.

Finally plans were made and an agenda was carefully prepared for the much more extensive meeting to be held at Chicago. There it would be considered whether any action could and should be taken. It was with trepidation and many prayers that we journeyed to Chicago to see what, if anything, would come of the project.

The number who appeared in the crowded room, some having come from as far away as the West coast, was reassuring. Rev. Edward Knott, Christian Reformed pastor from Rock Valley, Iowa, opened the meeting with a reading from Zechariah 4, introduced the agenda and acted as chairman of the ensuing discussion. The discussion was extensive. Many questions were frankly raised and fairly answered. Finally the time came for decision.

The key question to organize an association to establish a Reformed institution to train men for the gospel ministry was passed by a unanimous vote.

The next question about the structure for governing the proposed institution was answered by a vote for a three-level rather than two-level organization, with the society electing a board which in turn would elect local curators to carry out board decisions.

Some discussion about the target date for beginning classes resulted in a decision to begin no later than September of 1982, upon decision of the board.

It was decided to buy a very suitable building with eight acres of land at Orange City, Iowa, offered at an attractively low price.

Accreditation is to be sought as soon as possible. There are various possibilities for arranging to obtain this.

The organization is to be incorporated as the Mid-America Reformed Seminary Association. The steering committee which prepared the agenda is to submit to all members of the society a nomination for regular board members as soon as possible.

Before the meeting adjourned a final important matter had to be faced, that of beginning to raise funds. How strong would the vocally enthusiastic support actually prove to be? There was general surprise and thanksgiving to God when the amount immediately subscribed turned out to be \$40,585.

Few if any would have dared to expect that so much would come out of the meeting in such a short time. It was a deeply emotional moment, especially for Rev. John Vander Ploeg, *The Outlook's* former editor, who 10 years ago spoke to various groups about the urgent need for such a school as this.

The eventful organization meeting was concluded with prayer led by Rev. Neal Pronk, pastor of the Free Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Mich. The association and those it aims to serve are not limited to Christian Reformed Church members. It is an organization independent from the Reformed Fellowship. As our *Outlook* masthead states, one of the Fellowship's purposes is "as far as possible to further the interests of all Christian action and institutions of Reformed character." In harmony with that stated purpose we welcome and encourage this project.

In these early stages of its development any who wish to contribute to it may do so through the Reformed Fellowship. Gifts designated for it will be forwarded just as gifts have been received and given for the Tiv Reformed Seminary in Africa. May the Lord guide and prosper this new venture in His name.

— The Editor

In 1869, over 100 years ago, Robert L. Dabney, the famous Southern Presbyterian leader, wrote: "Everything supports the policy of having several seminaries; it is most imprudent to give supreme control over our orthodoxy to any one human institution, when we take into account the fallibility of all things human, the danger of awakening arrogance in the teachers and pupils of an institution so great and overshadowing, the known tendency of scholastic corporations to corruption, and the power which able teachers have over the minds of scholars, either for good or evil. The single thought of the deplorable situation in which the church in the Southern States would now be had Princeton continued our sole seminary, enforces these views beyond a dispute. Unless we are peculiarly shortsighted, and blind to the maxim of Solomon, that what has been is that which shall be hereafter, we shall consider it as our settled policy, after so striking a warning, to guard the safety and independence of our church by having several seminaries as checks on each other." ("Memorial on Theological Education" in *Discussions: Evangelical and Theological 2*, pp. 48, 49).

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).

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Contents:

June 1981	Volume XXXI	No. 6
A NEW REFORMED SEMINARY		2
The Editor		
THE MARVELOUS GRACE OF GOD		4
William A. Shell		
DID ADAM EXIST AS A HISTORICAL PERSON?		6
Neal Hegeman		
THE WATERSHED		8
Laurie Vanden Heuvel		
WHAT WILL THE CRC SYNOD DO?		10
Peter DeJong		
THE CHRISTIAN AND WORLD HUNGER		16
John E. Franken		
A MOVE TOWARD CONGREGATIONALISM		19
Henry Vanden Heuvel		
IS CAPITAL PUNISHMENT DEMANDED		20
Nicholas Vogelzang		
LETTERS TO THE EDITOR		22

The Marvelous Grace of God

William A. Shell

Professor William A. Shell, Reformed Bible College professor and minister of the Reformed Presbyterian Church Evangelical Synod, whose father and grandfather were Russian army officers, tells his unusual life story.

A Living Doctrine

As we carefully read the inspired, infallible, inerrant Word of God, we find that the totality of Scripture reveals to us a God who is sovereign and in control of all things in heaven and on earth. That sovereignty and control are seen not only in creation and redemption, but for the true children of God particularly evident in His providence. Professor Louis Berkhof has defined providence as "that work of God in which He preserves all His creatures, is active in all that happens in the world, and directs all things to their appointed end" (*Summary of Christian Doctrine*, page 55).

The Prophet Daniel expressed providence in this way in his prayer: "Praise be to the name of God for ever and ever; wisdom and power are His. He changes times and seasons; He sets up kings and deposes them. He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to the discerning. He reveals deep and hidden things; He knows what lies in darkness, and light dwells with Him" (Daniel 2:20-22, NIV). King Nebuchadnezzar finally acknowledged God's sovereignty and providence when he said, "His dominion is an eternal dominion; His kingdom endures from generation to generation. All the peoples of the earth are regarded as nothing. He does as He pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth. No one can hold back His hand or say to Him: 'What have you done?'" (Daniel 4:34-35, NIV).

This biblical teaching on providence is not merely a doctrinal matter reserved for theologians, but it is an extremely practical aspect of God's work in the lives of His people. When we give testimony to what God has done in our lives, we are acknowledging

both His sovereignty in saving us from our sins and His providence in guiding our lives throughout our time on earth to their appointed events and end. The work of God's marvelous, gracious providence is particularly evident, I believe, in my own life.

I believe that the events that led to my birth and my life since that time are all the result of God's providential acting among the nations of men, bringing to pass the series of events in my ancestry and in my own life that He has planned and purposed. As I look back on what has happened, I see His sovereign hand in the events, both pleasant and unpleasant, that have come to pass. And it has all been working for His glory.

My father and grandfather were both officers in the Imperial Russian Army, the former a lieutenant colonel and the latter a lieutenant general, whose military careers came to a sudden end with the Bolshevik Revolution of November 1917. When the Czarist and Republican cause was lost, my grandfather fled into exile to Yugoslavia, while my father, who was still single, kept fighting with the White Russian forces against the Communists ("Red Russians") for the next number of months. Finally the Communists prevailed and my father escaped into exile in China.

The country of China in the early 1920s was undergoing its own first experiments in democracy following the Sun Yat-sen revolution and became a refuge for the large community of "White Russians" who had fled their homeland following the Communist Revolution. These refugees readily found jobs with the Chinese government and the other western companies operating in China. My father worked with the customs service for the next two decades.

Meanwhile the hand of God's providence reaches across two continents and ties European Poland with Asia's China. The Imperial Government of China had invited my maternal grandfather to come and help them build the Manchurian (northern province) railroad and that would become his life's work till his death in China. In 1912 my mother was born in Harbin, one of the major cities of Manchuria and there she would meet my father 18 years later as

she became a secretary in the customs department in which my father worked. They were married in 1930 and a year later went on a trip to Europe to visit my paternal grandfather in Yugoslavia and relatives in Poland.

I was born on John Calvin's birthday in Belgrade, Yugoslavia, in 1931. Our family returned to China and my first years were spent in Shanghai. Here we lived in the International Settlement, associating with westerners, and I attended British schools in my early years, with Russian and Polish being the languages spoken in our home. Two wars, the First Sino-Japanese War in 1932 and the Second Sino-Japanese War in 1937, were fought around us, but we were preserved from danger. In 1939 my parents again visited Europe and we found ourselves in Poland toward the end of the summer of that significant year.

We were on a train from Poznan to Warsaw on the day that Hitler invaded Poland and started World War II. We were trapped in Warsaw with the Germans coming in from the west and the Soviets from the east. Following heavy bombing and shelling the capital city fell to the Germans, and in the midst of great destruction and loss of life we were again preserved from harm. My father through intense negotiations that lasted several months was able to get the whole family out of Poland and out of Europe, returning to Shanghai in the spring of 1940. He was then transferred to Tientsin in North China, where he died a year later.

Shortly thereafter my mother met a bachelor American banker and they were married in August 1942. In the meantime Pearl Harbor had come, we were already in Japanese held territory, so with our new family connections we were "enemies" and spent the duration of World War II in Asia in a Japanese civilian concentration camp. We were relieved by American parachute troops two days after the war was over, and again God had preserved us through those trying experiences. So my mother and I first came to the United States in December 1945.

Conversion

We settled in Dallas, Texas, where my step-father's relatives lived and my mother and I were first exposed to people who were Protestants and who believed a Book called the Holy Bible. I was then 14 years of age and had never heard the Gospel. My new relatives were faithful in presenting the Gospel to us, but with my earlier upbringing in Russian Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism I kept rejecting what they said. The thing that I could not reject, however, was the consistency of their Christian lives. These people lived what they said they believed. So God was using the testimony of their lives and their words to make an impression on me as the Holy Spirit began working on my stubborn heart.

I finished high school in Texas and began college at Baylor University. In the providence of God I drew a Christian roommate, who also testified to me of Jesus Christ both by word and life. Again I could

reject what he *said*, but I could not reject what he was like in his daily life. Now neither my relatives nor my roommate were perfect, but there was a consistency in their lives and a love that I could not understand.

College became a bore to me and the Korean War came along to stir up my military heritage and zeal. I joined the U.S. Navy and was off to fight another war. In very early 1953 I was stationed in Pensacola, Florida, when my step-father's mother died in Dallas, Texas. Since my parents were again overseas, I felt it my duty to go there for the funeral and hitchhiked to Texas from Florida. At the funeral service I was surprised by the opening words of the pastor when he said, "This woman, whose body lies before us, is now with Jesus Christ in heaven!" To my inner question of "How can you say that?" he replied, "Because she had trusted in Jesus Christ as her Lord and Saviour." He then proceeded to give a very simple biblical Gospel message, and at that funeral service God saw fit to open my eyes unto Himself, caused me to be born again, and I received Jesus Christ as my own Lord and Saviour as well.

The providence of God had preserved me through various adventures on three continents and brought me safe to this funeral parlor in Dallas to give me the gift of eternal life. As I look back on my life, even in times of war and great danger, I see the hand of the Lord in all that has transpired. He perfectly arranged for all things to occur as they did and brought me to the place where He would give me new life.

Christian Service

During my last two years in the Navy I was followed up by The Navigators, a Christian service organization working with the military and collegians, then entered seminary a year after graduation from college. I finished at Westminster Seminary in Philadelphia, ministered as an intern in an Orthodox Presbyterian Church in California, met and married my wife, enrolled at the Wheaton College Graduate School, and began teaching in a Christian high school in 1964. I pastored an OPC church in Waterloo, Iowa for three years, then returned to teaching. In 1973 I entered the Christian publishing field with an editing job in Wheaton, then became the managing editor of NavPress of The Navigators for four years, working and compiling on a total of over 40 books during the past eight years. In 1979 I returned to teaching, being appointed Assistant Professor of Biblical Studies and Extension at Reformed Bible College, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Throughout my years as a Christian I have again had ample evidence of the providence of God as He has guided me in my studies and in the ministry He has committed to me. My whole life has been a testimony to what Paul wrote: "For it is God who works in you to will and to act according to His good purpose" (Philippians 2:13, NIV). The key to living practically under the umbrella of the providence of God is willing submission to His clearly revealed will given to us in the Scriptures (cf. *Heidelberg Catechism*, Question and Answer 1).

Did Adam Exist as a Historical Person?

Neal Hegeman

This question is being asked in the CRC theological community. It is not a new question; most denominations have asked it and have come up with surprisingly different answers. Those who affirm the historical Adam have affirmed the traditional creationist view that God miraculously created man as a complete person. Those who deny Adam's personal existence have adopted different forms of evolutionism in which man developed from a sub-human or pre-Adam being.

The Board of Trustees of Calvin College and Seminary had to face this question in 1980 when the writer of this article protested the view of an Old Testament professor who did not believe Adam was a historical person. The Board listened to the protest, interviewed the people involved and appointed a committee of Biblical scholars and pastors to study the issue. Their recommendation was to advise or instruct the professor to conform to the historical event character of Genesis 1-11 and to uphold the teachings of the Church. The Board also called for a forum to deal with the questions which the professor had raised.

Why is this question so important? Is it only an academic theological problem which those skilled in Hebrew, archeology and geology can handle, or is it the concern of the whole Christian community? When we reflect on scriptural teachings concerning this issue we will see that our faith is at stake as well as obedience to our Lord and Saviour and His Word. Let us consider why.

1. The denial of the 1st Adam will lead to the denial of the second Adam.

"Then as *one man's* trespass led to condemnation for all men, so *one man's* act of righteousness leads to acquittal and life for all men" (Romans 5:18).

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If we deny the one man character of the 1st Adam, if we say that the 1st Adam was not our human forefather, our covenant head through whom sin came into the world and sin spread to all men, if we deny the reality of that person and his actions, then we will also deny the work and person of the 2nd Adam, who came to deal with what the 1st Adam had done.

A trademark of heresy is its assault on the work and person of Jesus Christ. The denial of the 1st Adam is an assault on the 2nd Adam. It is interesting to note that those who deny the historical Jonah and Biblical claims concerning the prophet Isaiah, fall into the same pitfall. Scholars are tempted to say that Jonah was not a historical person (contrary to Jonah 1:1) but represents a mythological figure symbolic of wayward Israel. Yet Jesus spoke of Jonah as a person and used his experiences in the fish as an illustration of his own death and resurrection. Christians need to believe that Jonah's experience was real, for their faith is identified with it.

"As Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale, so will the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (Mt. 12:39, 40).

Jesus wasn't just talking about history but redemptive history, history with redemptive value and meaning for us.

In the case of Isaiah, it has been said (*The Banner*, "Bible Studies," 2/2/81) that Isaiah did not author the whole book of Isaiah, especially not chapters 40-66. Yet, John the Baptist quotes Isaiah (Isa. 40:3, Mt. 3:3) in a prophecy concerning the coming of the Lord. If John were mistaken about his quote, who is to say that his message about Christ was authentic? Jesus quotes Isaiah 61:1-2 in Luke 4:17-19 in relationship to his ministry. Was he too ill-informed, unaware of what our modern scholars now know concerning the prophet Isaiah and his book of prophecy? How we speak about Isaiah will reflect what we think about Christ, or how well we listen to Christ, for Christ has spoken about Isaiah as well. When we

deny redemptive historical facts we will soon deny the Redeemer and that denial we must always strive against.

2. The denial of the 1st man will lead to a betrayal of mankind.

If God did not personally create man as described in Genesis 1-2 to be His personal, historical, sacred image bearer and representative in this world, then who is man?

There are millions who deny the creationist view of man and adopt the evolutionary view of the origins of man. Evolutionists see the origin of man in the animal world or in a sub-human being. The beginning of life is not completely human but it becomes human at a certain stage of development. Christian evolutionists (actually a contradiction of terms) claim that Adam represents man when he first developed to the stage of man.

What are the implications of such an evolutionary view? One implication is that man's beginning is mythologized, enshrouded in the animal world and not given the sacred and personal emphasis it ought to have. This is very much the ideology behind Western civilization's denial of the humanity and rights of the human fetus. Those who support abortion as a birth control technique and not as murder do not want to recognize the sacred and human identity of the fetus. The fetus is considered as sub-human and it doesn't become human until at a certain point of pregnancy or at birth. The big question for those who justify such abortion is, "When does life begin?" as if life does not exist at the point of conception and during all of life, from the beginning to eternity. Scripture teaches us that God recognizes humans, not only before conception (Gen. 15:4, Luke 1:13) but during pregnancy (Ps. 139:13-18, Luke 1:44) and, of course, after birth and to eternity.

Liberal theologians in support of evolution have helped to usher in the ideology which justifies abortion on demand. They have mythologized man's beginning and failed to proclaim God's sovereignty over all of life.

"Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man or birds or animals or reptiles. . . . And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up. . ." (Romans 1:22, 23, 28).

Some might say that it's a far jump to see the relationship between the theological denial of the 1st Adam and the political act of abortion on demand. True, if the evolutionist is not consistent in his views of man, if he treats all of life as sacred and personal, then he would be against abortion on demand, but the reverse is unfortunately more representative in Western civilization. Ask the parent, the doctor, and the politician who allow abortion on demand what they think about the fetus and you will hear the lie of evolutionism. In our church we must stop any support of that lie.

3. The denial of the 1st man will lead to a betrayal of the nature of Scripture.

How must we interpret Scripture? One important facet is that the Old Testament must be interpreted by the New Testament and vice versa. In the case of Adam, the New Testament reveals the following facts. Adam is:

- a. one man (Romans 5:12, I Cor. 15:21).
- b. first man (I Cor. 15:45).
- c. father of Seth (Luke 3:38).
- d. son of God (Luke 3:38).
- e. husband of Eve (I Tim. 2:13, 14).
- f. living being (I Cor. 15:45).
- g. sinner (Romans 5:12).
- h. representative of man (Romans 5:18).

A careful study of the New Testament could add more personal, historical and theological characteristics. If we deny these facts in Genesis 1-3, we certainly call the New Testament into question.

As Christian thinkers we must come to know our limits:

"The secret things belong to the Lord our God; but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law" (Deut. 29:29).

What things does Genesis 1-3 reveal about man? Genesis 2:7 reveals that his body is made from the earth; it was formed out of the dust and to dust it will return. No mention is made of a long time period between the formation of the body and the soul (man as a living being), nor of an intermediate step in which man was an animal or sub-human. When God miraculously made man He gave him life and so he became a living being. Man became a whole being; body, soul, spirit in response to the direct actions of God. Man was given cultural, moral and family responsibilities all of which constitute part of his definition.

Genesis 1-3 reveals certain absolutes about man which we must uphold in order to know who man is and what his responsibilities are as a creature of God. There is also relative information, things which the Bible does not comment on, and where the Bible is silent we should learn to be silent as well.

4. The denial of the 1st Adam is a denial of Church Confessions.

The reader can check the following Church teachings:

1. Canons of Dort: 1:1, III-I, 1, 2.
2. Heidelberg Cat.: Q. 6-8, 19.
3. Belgic Conf. V, XII, XIV, XV, XXIII.

Our college and seminary professors have signed the form of subscription, covenanting to uphold and teach in accordance with the Churches' teachings, which we believe reflect Scripture and the Spirit's direction. Can those who deny the 1st Adam still teach in the Church institutions with a clear conscience?

Let us pray that God will not give us up to our own claims to wisdom and knowledge but direct us to attentive and obedient listening to His inspired Word. ●

The Watershed

Laurie Vanden Heuvel

"Watershed" has been defined as a "critical decisive point; a turning point." If that definition is true, then we may have before us at the Christian Reformed Synod of 1981 a "watershed." After eight years of tossing the ball called "Women in ecclesiastical office" into opposing courts, the CR denomination must at last settle the issue as it pertains to women in the office of deacon. If the ratio of the study committee's recommendations is any indication of the mind of Synod, women will hold office in the CRC. Of the eight study committee members, only one, the Rev. Henry Vander Kam, is submitting a recommendation that the office *not be opened* to women — not because of any inferior qualities women possess or superior qualities which they lack, not because of any chauvinistic prejudice — but simply because the Scriptures, yes God Himself, closes the door.

Cultural Argument

It would be impossible to amass all of the arguments that have been advanced in the past ten years in favor of allowing women into ecclesiastical office. For a while the argument centered around the cultural situation in Paul's day. The pro-women-in-office forces maintained that Paul was only accommodating his views to the low position of women in that day and his words were never meant to be binding for all time. But the conservatives (for lack of a better term) chafed at this, pointing out that Paul grounded his remarks in the *creation order* and in the *headship of Christ* and that these were principal concepts and not cultural traditions. So in more recent discussions, the pro-women-in-office forces

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have addressed themselves more directly to the words of Scripture.

Hermeneutical Gymnastics

By sometimes unbelievable hermeneutical gymnastics, the pro-women-in-office supporters structure their interpretations of Scripture into two channels: 1) They try to show that Paul was addressing himself to specific problems in the early church and that his words are therefore not binding on us today. 2) (This is the most devious.) They *reinterpret* key concepts of Scripture such as *headship* and *submission* passages as they apply to *marriage* and *service in the church*. They will, for example, try to prove that women have equal rights in marriage and in the church because "in Christ there is no . . . male or female."

Submission — I Corinthians 14:34-36

Having established the fact that men and women have equal rights in Christ, they go on to interpret I Cor. 14:34-36 to mean that women in the Corinthian church knew they were now equal to their husbands and they did not know how to handle their new freedom, and so they were speaking in a disruptive way in the church. Paul now says in effect, (Until they know how to handle their freedom) "Let women keep silent in the churches."

I Timothy 2:11 and 12

Since I Timothy 2:11 and 12 occur in a context of warning against "false teaching," the pro-forces say that these women were not well-informed and therefore they had to "learn in quietness and submission." The point is that when they become better informed, they may speak in an official capacity with the same authority as men.

I Peter 3:1

The pro-supporters would also have us look at I Peter 3:1 in the light of I Peter 2:13 which says, "Submit yourselves to every *ordinance of man* for the Lord's sake." Since marriage is an ordinance of man (?) and submission was a part of that ordinance at that time, Paul says in 3:1, "Likewise you wives be in subjection to your own husbands." But, of course, if man's institution of marriage no longer includes wifely submission (as it does not in our day) then Paul's injunction no longer holds. The same principle applies to the interpretation of Ephesians 5:22-24.

Headship

In Colossians 1:18 we read that Christ "is the *head* of the body, the church." In I Cor. 11:3 we read that "the *head* of every man is Christ and the head of the woman is the man." Ephesians 5:23 emphasizes the same truth when it says, "For the husband is the *head* of the wife even as Christ is the *head* of the church." Obviously those who advocate women in a position of authority in the church are going to have to deal with the problem of *headship*. If the man is the head of the woman as Christ is the head of the church, authority and rulership obviously resides in the man and not the woman.

The pro-supporters would have us believe that the word "head" in the original language did not mean authority, but meant "source of life" so that Christ as *head* of the church only means He is the "source of life" to the church as also man is the "source of life" to woman, Eve having been taken from man. The pro-supporters would have us believe that the Bible is not laying down any kind of chain-of-command in these passages. It is not vesting any authority or ruling power in the male sex.

Other Arguments

The pro-supporters remind us that women prophesied in the Bible, although they cannot demonstrate any *official* proclamation by women in the church.

One supporter of women in ecclesiastical office writes in the *Pro Rege* publication that women in the church today are so much more educated than they were in the days of the early church and consequently they are *entitled* to positions of decision-making and authority in the church even to the point of occupying the highest office. We are certainly thankful for the growing number of educated women in the church who now have greater responsibility to serve. However, it does not follow that their educational status *entitles* them to office-holding in the church. It is significant that very few of Jesus' disciples or the apostles of the early church were "learned" men. It was in fact the "learned" of Jesus' day who hated Him and crucified Him. It is significant too that of all the qualifications laid down

for office-holders in the New Testament church, only one had to do with education and that is the qualification "apt to teach." Spiritual sensitivity, personal piety, male family headship and an exemplary family constituted the qualifications for office-bearers.

Response

Obviously the central issue in this whole debate is not women but Scripture itself. Do the Scriptures really say what we, the church, have been led by the Spirit to believe them to say for centuries: that, although men and women are *equal* in Christ (equal recipients of salvation) they nevertheless have different God-given *roles* in *marriage* and in the *church*; that these roles are rooted in God's *creation-order* and exemplified in the relationship of *Christ as head*; that the husband is to provide for and protect his wife and the wife is to "help" her husband; that fathers are held accountable for their families and they are to *rule* the church and women are to *serve*; that in ruling and in serving, there is to be a bond of love uniting man and woman so that each finds his and her highest joy in fulfilling those God-given roles? Are the injunctions of the Bible writers such as Paul and Peter binding for all time or are they culturally conditioned and limited?

The answer which our CR Synod of 1981 gives to these questions will have weighty implications for the future of the church.

Recently the *Grand Rapids Press*, in an article dealing with alternative theological education, said that if the CR Synod admitted women to office, the denomination would be sharply divided *because of the negative reaction of the conservatives*. Do you notice that the blame for dividing the church is placed on the faithful who stand in the Reformation tradition? Does not the blame for dividing the church really lie on the shoulders of those who propose to forsake the confessional integrity of our denomination? If there is a division of ranks in our denomination, let us at least put the blame in the proper place.

Other denominations are also plagued with division over this issue. The United Presbyterian Church USA has stipulated that every congregation *must elect* at least one woman elder. In congregations which refuse to do so, the presbytery (classis) will come in and hold an election. Agreement with the concept of women in office is now required of all candidates in that denomination.

Let us in the CRC never naively think that this could not happen to us. "A house divided against itself cannot stand." One side will triumph and dominate until all others yield or disappear. The Synod of 1981 in dealing with this issue will be a catalyst for good or ill in the future of the CRC.

What we must do is pray — pray that the Lord may make His will clear to us and give us the strength and courage to walk in it. ●

What Will the CRC Synod Do?

Peter De Jong

At this time of the year we again review the newly published *Agenda* ("things to be done") for the June Synod of the Christian Reformed churches. Such a survey may interest members of church consistories who get (but few of whom may read) the 472 page book, as well as other of our church members and readers.

The book contains reports of boards and standing committees, denominationally related agencies, and study committees and then overtures and printed appeals.

Radio and TV

The book begins with a brief report on what often seems one of the most exciting and influential opportunities the Lord has given our churches, the radio and TV outreach with the gospel. First there is a listing of the various radio and TV programs and their accompanying literature distribution in the English language. Then our attention is directed (as the daily news also often is) into the Arab world. There radio can and does reach ears and hearts in many places where because of Moslem opposition no missionary would be tolerated. Where today some advocate a policy of compromise in the missionary efforts toward the Islamic world, Rev. Bassam Madany is convinced "that Islam and Christianity are incompatible" as he preaches in his native Arabic the gospel of Christ as the only Savior. The gospel is broadcast in the Spanish language over approximately 135 local stations in South America and four in Spain as well as large facilities which reach around the world. The voice of Isaac Jen directs the gospel to close to one billion Chinese in their native language. Similarly, French language broadcasts reach into France, Africa, the Caribbean and Quebec Indonesian, Japanese and Portuguese programs reach other large areas of the world and since July 6 of last year a beginning has been made in a Russian program. The Back to God Hour has a new opportunity to program broadcasting of Radio Dominca in the Caribbean, which it asks the Synod to approve.

Calvin College and Seminary

The less than 6-page report of the Calvin Board of Trustees tells us virtually nothing about what is really happening in our college and seminary. As I observed last year, one could never guess from its few housekeeping details that these church-owned and supported institutions for training our future leaders confront us with some of our most threaten-

ing problems. The Board tells the church nothing in this official report of what it is doing about the year-old student complaint against Professor Stek's refusal to commit himself to presenting the first chapters of Genesis as factual history. Neal Hegeman's article in this *Outlook* reveals the problem. A college student's letter sent in for this issue of *The Outlook* also tells us much more about what is being done with the Bible in classrooms than does the official report of our delegates to those whom they are supposed to be representing.

In connection with the Calvin Report we may take notice of Overture Number 15 which refers to the requirement that students who have attended other seminaries spend one year at Calvin Seminary before becoming candidates for the ministry of our churches. Classis Hudson asks that this requirement be waived in the case of a Westminster graduate who has been preaching and teaching in its churches and community for several years. If the practical purpose of this old rule is considered to be to guarantee that the candidate will be thoroughly familiar with the Christian Reformed churches' faith and practices, there appears to be no need for its application in this case. It is ironic that that rule which was originally designed, it seems, to assure the Reformed orthodoxy of applicants for our churches' ministry can now be converted into an obstacle to the entry of students who want to hold a consistently orthodox position.

World Missions

Our churches' missions now reach into 23 nations overseas. Of the total budget to support these activities 52 percent comes from quota income, 48 percent from congregational and individual giving. One of the most significant developments has been the increasing transfer of formerly mission activities to the control of the national churches. In Mexico some very serious problems have developed in this matter. In Nigeria last November the operations of our churches' mission in the Tiv area were turned over to the Synod of the Tiv Church. In 1980 our Board also "decided to use the money budgeted for three missionary positions to assist NKST (the Tiv Church) in expanding facilities at Reformed Theological College of Nigeria, which now has over fifty students" (p. 49). This is the school which the Reformed Fellowship long encouraged and supported although it was opposed by some of our influential missionaries and administrators. Now it is getting official endorsement and support.

The report calls attention to the continuing problems that arise where our churches' missions and world relief organizations carry on independent work in the same areas (p. 43). The same churches conducting such two-headed programs is bound to raise problems both of principle and practice.

Attention is directed to the explosive political situation in Central America. The report mentions "critiques of capitalism" and "the inhumanity of multinational corporations," etc. (p. 60). "It may be forthrightly said that in general our missionaries identified themselves with the cause of those who have been victimized by the rich and powerful elite. As is so often the case, it is among the poor and struggling ones that the gospel finds entrance. This gospel is by no means a call to quietude in the postponement of the blessings of salvation into the future." "The churches so planted become yeast and ferment and are enabled to address the injustices of their societies in the name of Christ. On some occasions our missionaries have been in extreme danger because of their courage in this context. At the same time, it should be clear that the missionaries may themselves become an embarrassment to the national groups they nurture."

In this connection our readers may have noticed the open letter in *The Banner* (April 13, 1981, p. 32) which our Latin America area mission secretary, Rev. G. Bernard Doctor, writing under our churches World Mission letterhead, addressed to President Reagan urging him to deny further military aid to the government of El Salvador in its war against a take-over by Communist guerrillas. By what authority does this mission secretary (whose reappointment must be decided by this Synod — p. 39) presume to commit the whole denomination to such a partisan opinion on a strictly political issue? The Lord never committed us to bring a gospel of political revolution, although He was under constant pressure in the political situation of 1st Century Palestine to identify Himself with a political revolt against the Roman overlords. Paul and the other early missionaries preached "repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ" and studiously avoided being diverted into trying to destroy the political systems. The influence of the gospel did eventually correct social evils and alter institutions, but to make of it a political revolutionary movement is a perversion, the kind of perversion of which the Liberal churches of our time are notoriously guilty. It is as wrong in principle as it is foolish in practice for the missionary as a guest in a foreign country to try to tell the people among whom he lives how they must handle their internal affairs. It would seem that when our missionaries and even our mission administration try to hinder the established government from defending itself against a Marxian guerrilla take-over they are asking for their expulsion. And when the missionary identifies himself with one class of people (or race) against another he is no longer faithful to his gospel calling to bring the gospel to all kinds of classes and peoples (1 Cor. 9:19-22 "I am made all things to all men that I might by all means save some."). These

indications of our mission policy in Latin America raise some serious questions about what kind of mission we are supporting.

Home Missions

The Board of Home Missions surveys domestic mission and church developments. It is attempting to put more emphasis on local authority and responsibility (p. 72). In connection with the Home Missions report we may notice also the later Report 38 (p. 418 ff.) which contains the recommendations of the Council of Indian Churches on the formation of a new classis of Indian churches. One wonders about the need or propriety of making the significant changes in the church order and form of subscription which are recommended for the use of the Indian churches. These are hardly racial matters and the notion that they should be simplified for Indians seems itself to reflect a kind of race prejudice that should not govern decisions of our churches. Quota adjustments for Indian churches are unnecessary if we only remember that quotas have never properly been more than general recommendations. (See Overture Number 12 on Quotas.)

Publications

The Board of Publications devotes a good deal of attention to its committee structure. Since 1973 when the systematic teaching of Christian doctrine on the basis of the Heidelberg Catechism was "consciously abandoned" in favor of a United Church School Curriculum a number of our churches which are still committed to systematic catechism training of the young have disregarded most of the productions of the education department, which were not designed to meet their needs, and obtained other catechism books. (The Reformed Fellowship sells a number of them.) The Board has decided to reprint a number of its older materials (some lightly edited), for which there continues to be a demand.

World Relief

Our World Relief Committee continues to function in a number of areas of the world. It directs attention to the annual Day of Prayer and Fasting which it is endeavoring to sell to the churches. It has been observed by those familiar with the Moslem World that a number of peculiarities of our promoted practice resemble rather closely those prescribed for the Moslem Ramadan. And one has about as little Biblical grounding as the other. The Committee also shows an inclination to stray from the helping the needy in the name of Christ into the, for the church, tricky political ground of working for "social justice and structural change" (p. 105). The report calls attention to the fact that in its Bangladesh work with farmers there is a "complete lack of an evangelism program" and little or no prospect of getting one. It closed its Jordan program in February of 1980 because of the impossibility of an evangelical witness in it.

Tracts

The Back-to-God Hour Tract Committee is recommending that its operations cease since they are largely duplications of what others are doing.

Bible Translation

The Bible Translation Committee has begun reviewing the New American Standard Bible.

Translation and Educational Assistance Committee

Since 1979 an effort has been made to merge the work of translating Christian literature into other languages with that of assisting students from churches abroad to come to Calvin Seminary for further study. In view of the differences between these two programs it is now being recommended that the Synod abandon the effort to merge them under one committee. The literature translation program is one that calls for enthusiastic support in view of the classic Reformed materials that are being made available in other languages. The support of students from abroad at Calvin Seminary is a more doubtful business. (1) Uprooting students from their own culture and manner of living for an extended period of study in the U.S. sometimes does more to hinder than help them prepare for effective Christian service in their own country. (2) The Report alludes to the problem of separating families and the expense of supporting whole families when the husband and father studies here. (3) More serious than the economic and social problems of this program is the question whether study at Calvin Seminary will strengthen or weaken their Christian convictions and ability to give sound, Bible-believing leadership to their home churches.

Interchurch Relations

The report of our committee dealing with interchurch relations both in its dealing with the Reformed Ecumenical Synod and its handling of the relations between churches shows more of an inclination to criticize the South African situation than to deal forthrightly with our continuing church relationship with the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands. As I pointed out in the April *Outlook* ("Time to Break Fellowship," pp. 5-8), those churches in their recent decisions clearly reject the authority of the Bible, insist on compromising even such fundamental doctrines of the resurrection of Christ, and insist that what the Bible brands as immorality and vice abominable to God must be tolerated without criticism in their churches. Yet our committee makes no recommendation of any action by our churches and has tried to deter the Reformed Ecumenical Synod from an apparent inclination to condemn the actions of those churches (pp. 154-158). Has the time not arrived when our churches must adopt Overture Number 5 (pp. 436, 437) of Grand Rapids South to "sever relations with the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland"? Or will our churches defy

the injunction of God's Word, "Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness but rather reprove them" (Eph. 5:11)?

Liturgy

The Liturgical Committee confronts us with another 45 pages of new liturgical material. This includes, among other items, more variations on Lord's Supper forms, an effort to distinguish by the color of print what is supposed to be mandatory and what is optional, more baptism forms, responsive readings of the law, and a collection of prayers which the committee recognizes "are never used in most congregations and only rarely used in the rest of the churches" (p. 185). Although the committee's work seems to show more of an inclination to retain much of the dignified phraseology of our older forms than some former committee productions did, one also notices in this year's collection the reappearance of the wedding prayer that presumptuously instructs the Lord how He should direct the couple and counsel them when they get in trouble (pp. 190-191)! Twice there appears the grandiloquent request to be "openly marked" by "a faith that will stand the light of day and endure the dark of night" (pp. 203, 208). Ask yourself what that is supposed to mean. The mixed metaphor makes no sense. Should our Synod officially approve it as a guide to our churches to show them how to pray?

Notice the florid style and poor exegesis of "grain from many fields" and "grapes from many hills" (p. 169; cf. 1 Cor. 10:17).

We read this instruction regarding LENT: "*The season of Lent is a period of recollection for the whole church. It continues for forty days from Ash Wednesday to Palm Sunday. In the Bible, the number forty has a symbolic meaning — signifying a spiritual struggle, to which God promises victory. The church is called to partake in forty days of purification, of setting aside of discipline, of meditation and prayer, before celebrating Easter.*" By what authority is this relic of Roman Catholic superstition resurrected and made a duty of Reformed churches? To recall it as a custom may have some value; to make it a duty is to teach a false doctrine.

Notice the weakness of the second question in the proposed form for adult baptism: "Do you believe that the Bible is the Word of God revealing Christ and his redemption, and that the confessions of this church faithfully reflect this revelation?" Observe how little this really says about what the applicant believes. If the old form is in some respects unnecessarily detailed, isn't this too ambiguous?

One becomes increasingly skeptical about the usefulness of this rapidly swelling collection of liturgies. The churches who have become addicted to seeking novelties in their worship will never be satisfied with or limit themselves to what is prescribed in the annual committee productions and other churches who find the recommended forms needlessly complex and pretentious or worse will continue to ignore them. In the attention to endlessly changing forms the seriousness and simplicity of proper worship of the Lord is in danger of being lost from sight.

And even the diverging ways we worship help to separate our churches from one another. Will the Synod continue to encourage this process?

Ministers' Pensions

The pensions of ministers get a review in the regular report (#37, pp. 214-221) and in a special report (#30, pp. 271-301), as an overture (#2, pp. 430-433) challenges the way they are funded. Especially the special report argues the propriety of the present system.

Race

A Race Committee was appointed some years ago with a broad mandate to eliminate racism in the church "and throughout the world in which we live" but with no specific job assignment. The result has been frequent frustrations for the committee and a growing waste of church money. A review of past budgets showed how half or more of the money collected was spent to man the office and the rest was given to other agencies to fund activities that gave special favors to members of minority races such as scholarships exclusively for their benefit. I know of no effort to even try to explain how such racially discriminatory activities were supposed to remove race discrimination! During the last year a new discriminatory program has been added, to develop minority leadership. This year the Agenda report (like last year's) tells us virtually nothing about what the committee is doing with its money, asks for an increased quota, \$2.70 per family (which multiplied by almost 70,000 church families should bring in nearly \$190,000), and asks to be given permanent status as a standing committee of the church instead of having to seek periodic renewal of its assignment. How long will our churches, pressed by an economic recession that curtails important gospel ministries, insist on spending almost \$200,000 on this self-contradictory and inherently wasteful enterprise?

Synodical Interim Committee

The Report of the Synodical Interim Committee gives considerable attention to a sub-committee report which deals with the disturbing problem of ministers who are leaving the gospel ministry and the low morale it reveals among ministers.

In connection with this report we notice also another (#38, pp. 402-415) which had to review the performance of the Synodical Interim Committee. This review committee had to deal with the hierarchical development of the Synodical Interim Committee which "has come to function as a board responsible for a sizable agency with a growing staff, program, offices and budget." "We worked," says the report, "at encouraging the SIC to become more accountable to Synod (and, through Synod, to the church) for its own agency-like functions. . ." (p. 404). "Similarly, the SIC staff members should function not as 'faculty advisors' to committees at Synod, but in the same consulting role assumed by other agency staff members.

"C. The SIC's work at program planning and coordination with the agencies appears to be still (or to be again) upside down. Despite the 1976 Synod's clear directives and unmistakable intent, the SIC appears to have taken to itself, as it did before, the role of *coordinator*. And the other agencies have let the SIC do it, thereby absolving themselves of the responsibility to coordinate their own efforts.

"D. The rules governing the SIC seem imprecise, and they reflect little or no awareness of the fact the SIC has become a substantial programming agency requiring administrative guidelines and procedures." Therefore the review committee proceeded to recommend some improvements of the rules that should govern the functioning of the SIC.

The review committee report plainly places before the Synod the fact that the Synodical Interim Committee has become a hierarchical body which increasingly manages the business of the church without being really accountable to anyone. Its proposed rule revisions are supposed to correct that. We notice, however, that one of the proposed new rules even seems to greatly enlarge the power of this committee: (B, 3, p. 409). The SIC "shall identify, analyze, and make recommendations to synod with respect to matters of denominational concern, but which do not fall within the mandate of existing denominational agencies." If this means anything it seems to say that the SIC is thereby empowered to bypass consistories or classes, to initiate "overtures" to the Synod to do anything that concerns the denomination! The Synod will have to take more effective action than this if it is going to maintain for (or restore to) our churches anything like a genuinely Reformed church polity instead of a growing, independent bureaucracy.

Financial Reporting

A very important development in our Agenda which is likely to slip by unnoticed is that financial reports of the work of various church agencies have almost completely disappeared from its pages. Some committee reports include a little footnote such as that on p. 127: "Financial statements and reports will be placed in the Financial & Business Supplement — Agenda for Synod 1981." We notice on p. 248 that "This detailed supplemental agenda and its contents represent the denominational agencies' response to requests for greater accountability and disclosure in the use of denominational funds." Elsewhere we learn (p. 244) that "This volume will be sent to all delegates to the Synod of 1981. It is also available to all of our consistories upon request." The regular Agendas are sent to all of the church consistories so that every office-holder in the church gets or can get a copy; but the financial supplement is sent *only to Synod delegates and those few consistories who will go to the extra trouble of putting in a special request for it*. Notice that the effect of this policy is to conceal very effectively from even the officers of the churches what is being done with their gifts! Responsible business agencies and industries and respectable charities publicize their finan-

cial reports. Why does our denomination by this subterfuge of a supplementary report keep most of our churches from knowing what is being done with their money. And this device has even been cited as a reply to recent overtures that asked for more public disclosure to our members of our financial activities! This policy of secrecy can only encourage suspicion and invite abuse. This effective financial secrecy about church business is a very significant and important feature of the previously mentioned hierarchical perversion that increasingly characterizes our denomination.

Denominationally Related Agencies

Among the denominationally related agencies which present brief reports as they seek the continuing support of our churches we notice a report from the new King's College (p. 259-60), and Overture Number 16 (p. 445) asks for a recommendation of its support. When it opened it was welcomed by some as starting considerably ahead of some other such schools because it was not committed to holding any church creeds. Regarding this matter the report only indicates that the context of its education is "a view informed by the Bible, the authoritative Word of God as confessed by the early church and in the creeds of the Protestant Reformation. The College is committed to offering a Reformed biblical perspective to its students most of whom are from the Christian Reformed Church." The overture for its support mentions only its "teaching from a reformational philosophy of learning." Does or should our Synod have any standards for determining what institutions it should recommend?

Capital Punishment

This Synod again finds itself confronted by the report of a committee on Capital Punishment. The report, presented in 1979, reappears with a few editorial changes, but essentially the same as the earlier version. Classis Orange City in 1976 asked our Synod to address our governments in favor of capital punishment. The report of this committee is for the most part an argument against the tradition in Reformed theology and ethics that God's righteousness "demands" the death penalty for murder. It quotes repeatedly from John Murray's extensive treatment of the subject in his *Principles of Conduct* (as well as many other authors). Yet it comes to an opposite conclusion from the one reached by John Murray (and other Reformed scholars). Why? The answer to this question is revealing. John Murray in a chapter on "The Sanctity of Life (pp. 107-122) does his usual extensive Biblical study calling special attention to Genesis 9:2a, 5, 6, noting "the reason for the exaction of the death penalty, 'for in the image of God made he man.'" Analyzing the text he points out that "here a charge is given to man to execute the death penalty." "... the accent falls upon the divine image in man as the rationale of the execution of the death penalty." He shows how later Old Testament legislation simply confirms and conforms to

this divinely revealed principle and that the New Testament passages do the same. He deals at length with the various arguments that have been brought up against the principle he sees in these Scriptures, concluding, "We have sufficient evidence, therefore for the conclusion that the institution of capital punishment is not abrogated in the New Testament. . . ." "The perpetuity of this sanction accentuates the gravity of the offence involved in murder. Nothing shows the moral bankruptcy of a people more than the disregard of the sanctity of human life. And it is the same atrophy of moral fibre that appears in the plea for the abolition of the death penalty." "The deeper our regard for life the firmer will be our hold upon the penal sanction which the violation of that sanctity merits."

The committee rejects this whole argument of Murray and others and devotes its attention mainly to criticism of the text of Gen. 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*. It is suggested that if this security "could be attained by . . . restraints short of execution, would not God's gracious intent still be honored. . . ?" We are told that this is not really a *command* but a permission. That it was not talking about governments, that it may have been merely "something like a proverb," or a prediction. It suggests that "it is doubtful that capital punishment. . . is one of the better ways in which the state can give expression to its esteem for humankind." It attacks the unity of the text attempting to separate the two parts, expressing "doubt that God could present as a *reason* for the death penalty the fact that man is made in the image of God." While killings are sometimes necessary "in order to secure the public good," "they are not something either God or man can posit as a goal or establish as a plan." Could anything show more clearly than this critical manhandling of this text the contempt of this committee (of present or past Calvin professors) for the text of God's Word? The committee argues that while the government does not have to execute the murderer it may resort to capital punishment, but should only do so in exceptional cases. The apparently conservative sound of this recommendation should not obscure its radical character. Denying the ground that *God's Word* gives for exacting this penalty, it makes its use merely a matter of the government's (and the committee's) opinion of what is expedient! The Bible warns us of God's judgments upon those who reject His Word. One does not have to look far in our society for the evidences of such judgments. One of them is the ever increasing level of violence and the multiplication of murders, which makes our society increasingly resemble that which existed before the Genesis flood. Should we be surprised at this development (which has reached the point at which a president is shot shortly after taking office) when even our church theologians reject the very principle of law which the Lord established to check such violence? This tampering with and rejecting God's Word is bringing and will bring frightening consequences (Deut. 4:2; 12:32; Rev. 22:19).

Women in Church Office

The same issue which surfaces in the report on capital punishment, the question of whether the Bible's plain teaching will control our decisions, confronts our churches also as they face what may claim much of the Synod's attention. That is the question of whether women are to be admitted to church offices. After an interesting and instructive historical survey (pp. 346-372) the reporting committee splits into three when it makes recommendations. A majority of four members would "allow consistories to ordain qualified women to the office of deacon, provided that their work is distinguished from that of elders" making the necessary church order changes which would permit this.

A minority of three would open the office of deacon to women without the qualification that their work would have to be distinguished from that of elders.

A minority of one, Rev. Henry Vander Kam, recommends that "the present practice of excluding women from ecclesiastical office be maintained" on the grounds that

1. Biblical teaching does not warrant a change (1 Cor. 11:2-16; 14:33-36; 1 Tim. 2:9-15).

2. The headship principle would be violated if women held such office.

3. The nature of office prohibits a change in practice."

Additionally, four overtures ask the Synod to throw the office of deacon open to women and two (numbers 4 and 20) argue for the opening of all offices to them. (The latter, authored by Dr. Marvin Hoogland, argues by selective use of Scriptures that history is moving toward the principle of democracy "as most nearly in conformity to the will of God" and reduces all authority, even that of Christ, to nothing more than service (conveniently forgetting about His exaltation and return to judge).

Although much has been written, also in *The Outlook*, about this subject, the main points of the argument are relatively simple. The Scripture passages cited by Rev. H. Vander Kam state plainly that women are to "keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak" and that these are "the commandments of the Lord" (1 Cor. 14:34, 37), and that in the church the woman is not permitted "to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man," as a principle traceable to creation (1 Tim. 2:12, 13). Many labor, along the same lines as those followed by the committee on capital punishment to destroy the teaching of these Scriptures. Will the Synod listen to them and positively agree to contradict these Scriptures; or will it, as many are suggesting it do, approve of every church doing whatever it pleases, thereby really also setting aside the Biblical teaching?

It will be tempting to many to follow the recommendation of the committee majority and by curtailing the part that deacons in our churches now have in church government, permit their holding the office of deacon without their violating the Bible's prohibition against women's rule in the church. This attempted compromise will probably satisfy no one

and a serious objection to it is that no one has ever been able to produce any clear evidence from the Bible that women ever held the church office of deacon — or that deacons were prohibited from assisting, as they do in our churches, in the government of the churches. If a majority at the Synod drives through some kind of compromise in defiance of the lack of Biblical grounds it will be bound to deepen the widening rift in our churches.

The Verhey Case

The same issue of maintaining the Bible's authority for our faith and life which the Synod faces in the major issues already mentioned confronts the Synod again as the Dutton church, after many evasions and delays, this time with the support of the Classis Thornapple Valley, gets its appeal on the Synod Agenda (Appeal Number 1, pp. 467-468). The church was compelled to object to Dr. Verhey's misuse of the Scripture, not only in the matter of the serpent in Genesis and the earthquake mentioned in Matthew 28, but as a principle which he defended in dealing with all of the Bible. The 1979 Synod while admitting that his views were objectionable, minimized them, in defiance of his own explanation, and in effect, by its inaction condoned them.

Classis Kalamazoo in Appeal Number 3 brings the same matter to the Synod asking the Synod to declare that such views as these "cannot be taught in our churches."

Quotas

Overtures 1, 12 and 13 deal with quotas, Number 12 asking that their nature be explained as recommended averages not taxes (to "bind consciences" in violation of Belgic Confession Article XXXII. Cf. also article on Quotas in Sept. 1980 *The Outlook*).

Marriage Guidelines

Overture 21 calls attention to weaknesses and contradictions in the Marriage Guidelines decisions of last year, asking that they be rectified.

The Boer Case

Appeal Number 4 argues that last year's Synod in the manner of its rejection of Dr. Harry Boer's attack on the doctrine of reprobation was really revising the creed and in this way attempts to reopen the whole debate. It must be remembered that Synod decisions include only what is specifically stated and never imply accepting all of the argument of the committee reports on which they are based. This is true even when, as in this case, the report is referred to the churches as useful for further study.

As the Synod faces some major decisions may there be much prayer that they may be directed by God's Word and Spirit and not by a concern to please men and women. ●

The Christian and World Hunger

John E. Franken

Have you ever wrestled with that nagging question what the Bible has to say about world hunger? Or with the (equally nagging) related question as to whether our CRC's philosophical approach to feed the hungry *indiscriminately* is strictly based on Biblical principles, or perhaps influenced by contemporary philosophical ideas? Whether or not you have given these subjects any thought, the fact remains that these are real life issues and important to our denomination. While the subject is complex, I write as a layman for laymen. You likely will find the article controversial; but you will also find the approach to the questions Biblical and, therefore, positive.

Searching for Biblical Principles:

When searching the Scriptures, one finds over and over again in the Old Testament, the admonition to care for the widow, the orphan, and the stranger (i.e. sojourner) *who resides with you* (examples: Lev. 19:10; 23:22; Deut. 14:29; 26:12); but nowhere does one find that the Israelites were commanded to feed the Moabites, the Philistines, or any other "foreign" nation. Even when examining Isaiah 16:3, 4 (which appears to instruct the people of Israel to feed the outcasts of Moab) one finds that these Moabites were refugees who were trying to enter the land of Israel and as such, attempted to become "strangers who resided with the people of God," which consequently must be fed. God's Word, as proclaimed by Isaiah said: "do not close your borders to prevent these people from becoming strangers in your land."

Going to the New Testament for guidance, one may become puzzled by the following: in Matt. 4:24, we read that the news about Jesus went even *into all Syria and that all the ill* who were brought to Him *were healed*. In the same way, Luke 6:17, 18,

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NOTE: All quotations taken from the New American Standard Bible.

reports that the people *from Tyre and Sidon who came to hear Him and to be healed, were cured*. Yet when Jesus *departs* from His own country to go on a retreat in that same region (Tyre and Sidon — Matt. 15:21), He tells His disciples that He does not want to hear the petition from a needy woman, because: "I was only sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matt. 15:24). When the woman finally bows down before Him and calls Him "Lord," He brushes her off, comparing her to a dog. Only when she shows humble trust in His mercy does He grant her her request. Is it not surprising that Jesus healed all those foreigners who had come to Him *within the borders of His own land*, yet at first He refused to heal this woman of the same race when she approached Him while He was *outside the borders of His own land*? Could it have anything to do with God's command to treat the sojourner *within your gates* just as you would treat the widow and the orphan?

In the parable of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31), Jesus said that the man lived "*sumptuously every day*." According to two Dutch and four English translations (including a linear translation), the meaning seems to be that the rich man *feasted* lavishly every day. Compare these words from Jesus with Luke 12:21, when talking about another rich man, Jesus said: "So is he who lays up treasure for himself *and is not rich toward God*." To be rich does not appear to be sinful in itself; we will come back to this later. Riches may even be a blessing from God. What generally is sinful is our response to riches: selfishness and greed. Back to the parable; the rich man selfishly feasted lavishly each and every day without any compassion for the poor stranger at his gate. That was a blatant transgression of God's repeated instructions to take care of the sojourner who resided with them. To make matters worse, Lazarus was not a sojourner, but a brother (i.e., a child of Abraham). In regard to brothers, God's Word becomes even more specific. Listen to what God says: "If there is a poor man with you, one of your brothers, in any of your towns in your land which the Lord your God is giving you, you shall not harden your heart, nor close your hand from the poor brother" (Deut. 15:7). After flagrantly disobeying God's command by hardening his heart and closing his hand in

regard to Lazarus, the rich man finally dies and wakes up in hell seeing "brother" Lazarus in Abraham's bosom. The parable ends with Jesus having Abraham point out to the rich man that his brothers had the Law and the Prophets to listen to, just as the rich man could have done. Now we are back where we started this section. What did the Old Testament Law require? To take care of the widow, the orphan, and the sojourner who resided in Israel; and especially to be very careful not to harden hearts or close hands when a poor "brother" is involved.

Turning to the New Testament we find mentioned in many places that the churches in Asia were supporting *the church* in Jerusalem. One wonders: were there no poor among the non-Christian Jews in Jerusalem? Why didn't the churches collect money for them? Why this discrimination? This (some may point out) is an argument from silence. While that cannot be denied, further study of God's Word will reveal that there is a qualitative difference in God's care for Christians and non-Christians.

In searching further, we find in Matt. 25:31-36, Jesus' discussion as to what will happen in the last days. Our judging Lord will say to the sheep: "... inasmuch as you did it to one of these *brothers of mine*, you did it unto Me." Compare that statement with Mark 9:41 where Jesus says: "For whosoever gives you a cup of water to drink *because of your name as followers of Christ*, truly I say to you he shall not lose his reward." Next go to Mark 3:35, where you will find Jesus saying: "For whosoever does the will of God, he is my brother, sister and mother," by which statement He even disassociated Himself from His own kin as far as the terminology brother, sister and mother were concerned. We find a similar statement in Matt. 12:50. There can be no doubt in our minds that our Lord is very discriminating as to whom He considers to be His "brother," when in Matt. 25:40 He refers to "one of these brothers of mine." Then note the absence of the word "brother" in verse 45 when He addresses the goats. Why? In view of Mark 9:41: "For whosoever gives you a cup of water to drink *because of your name as a follower of Christ*, truly I say to you he shall not lose his reward," it must be obvious that our Lord pointed to the sheep ("these") while He was addressing the goats. To believe that the "these" referred to the goats would first of all render Mark 9:41 meaningless, while at the same time it would be suggesting that Jesus identified Himself with the goats. Of that group, we read that their names were not found in the Book of Life (Rev. 20:15) from the foundation of the world (Rev. 17:8).

In counting the term "one another" in such expressions as "love one another," "be hospitable to one another," "serve one another," etc., one comes upon this expression some thirty odd times in the letters of the apostles written to the churches; or to the saints in Corinth, Galatia, Ephesus, Colossae and Thessalonica; or to the twelve tribes which were dispersed abroad; or to the aliens scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, which were chosen of God. Here again, one finds that all these texts instruct the saints to *help* those who

were *Christians* and/or the poor strangers *in the land*.

On the personal level: my wife and I know what real hunger is, both from experience as well as from observation. During World War II, I was a prisoner of war of the Japanese army for three and a half years and, believe me, we were hungry! My wife was in Holland during the German occupation; and especially during the hunger winter of 1944, she learned what hunger was all about. In September of 1945, right after the end of the war, I drove a truck through the streets of Singapore to pick up Indonesian and other Asian people whom we found starving along the streets. Frequently, a part of my load had died by the time I reached the Red Cross Camp. My wife, as a Red Cross Nurse, was elsewhere involved in the treatment of these poor souls. Just because we know how ugly hunger is and how hunger is not a respecter of persons or of faith, we desperately wanted to help. Yet, on the other hand, we only wanted to help in accordance with God's revealed will. And because we did not fully understand God's will, we struggled: "Lord, how and to what extent do you want us to help those poor starving non-Christian strangers in far away lands? Or shall we only feed the poor non-Christian *within the borders of our country* and help the poor *Christians throughout the world*? Please give us guidance, Lord."

The CRC and World Hunger:

In turning to sources to enlighten me on God's will, I also turned to a booklet published by the Christian Reformed Church entitled "And He Had Compassion On Them." We are not told by whom this booklet was written, only that it was "based" on a report prepared for the Christian Reformed Church Synod, 1978. This statement is then followed by a list of the names of the Synodical Committee. The casual reader can easily mistake the list of the names as the persons responsible for this booklet; and perhaps they are.

I am sorry that I found the booklet to be of no help for my struggle in regard to the Christian's responsibility in relation to world hunger. I found the booklet wanting in two areas.

The first area is the Biblical exegesis of different "proof texts" offered to prove that we must feed the hungry of the world *indiscriminately*. I found that in almost all cases the treatment of these Bible verses was slanted in order to prove that point. This is not meant as an indication of the author's or authors' personal faith or Biblical knowledge, but it shows his (their) enthusiasm for the cause. Let me cite some examples. In the treatment of THE LAW ON CHARGING INTEREST (page 26) the omission of Deut. 23:20 helps to make an easy transition from the words "If you lend money to any of *my people*, who is poor . . ." (page 26) to: "the prior concern of the Lord's people must be to help the *poor* . . ." (page 27). What does Deut. 23:20 say? "You may charge interest to a foreigner but to your countrymen you shall not charge interest." By not mentioning Deut. 23:20 the reader may be left with the impression that

in these passages God forbade the charging of interest to all the people of the whole world.

Another example can be found in the treatment of THE LAW CONCERNING THE SABBATH YEAR (page 27). Here we find the following sentence: "Even more remarkable, during the Sabbath year all charitable debts had to be cancelled (Deut. 15:1-6)." Verifying the context of this passage in the Bible, I read in verse 3: "from the *foreigner* you may extract it, but your hand shall release whatever of yours is with your *brother*." This significant exception is not mentioned in the treatment of the subject; therefore, it will give any reader who does not verify the context of the passage the wrong impression. I cannot help but wonder why the author(s) passed over this discriminatory clause.

Other passages used to justify the indiscriminate feeding of the hungry of the world are: James 2:15-17, "If a *brother or a sister* is ill clad and in lack of daily food . . ." a little later becomes "God is concerned that *the hungry* be fed . . ." (page 36). Also, in the treatment of I Cor. 16:1-4 (pages 35 and 36) no attempt is made to wrestle with verse 2 of that chapter: "now concerning the collections *for the saints* . . ." where God's Word again limits itself to the help of *the saints*. All that the booklet tells us is that "Paul urged the church in Corinth to lay in store, regularly and in advance, gifts to be sent to Jerusalem;" no struggle whatsoever with the fact that the money was only to be used for the saints.

In the chapter on BEYOND THE HOUSEHOLD OF FAITH (page 58) the author(s) admit that "a number of passages above" speak about caring for the household of faith. The problem is that in my opinion, *all* the passages mentioned refer only to the household of faith, not just a *number of them*.

The second area in which I had problems with the booklet is that it is not written from a Reformed point of view. The first chapter WORLD HUNGER (pages 2 through 10) could have been written by any scientist (including an atheist), except by one who is committed to a Reformed world and life view. A statement like: "the *basic* cause of hunger, malnutrition and starvation is simply the *inability to obtain food*" (page 4); and "this brings us to a *fundamental reason for hunger* throughout the world, namely, *the lack of money to buy food*" (page 8) hardly can come from the pen of a scientist who totally believes in the sovereignty of God. Furthermore, the statement: "population growth concerns all of us because our spaceship Earth is finite" (page 5) one expects to find in an article published by Friends of the Earth; while a positive statement: "so although production of food is adequate at the present time, population growth *will make* supplies woefully inadequate in the future" (page 8) is what one would expect from the pen of a scientist who has never heard the expression "if the Lord tarries" or "D.V.," a view against which the apostle James cautions us in his letter (James 4:13-17). Also, the booklet does not appear to be written with the Church Order in mind. Synod's mandate was: "#9. That Synod instructs CRWRC with the assistance of other denominational agencies; along with local deacons and diaconal conferences to sponsor conferences and workshops on

world hunger throughout the denomination" (page 85/appendix). In Chapter 9 of the booklet, the author(s) basically suggests to "Groups" and "Sub-Groups" to do the following: 1. "evaluate themselves, their families, their church, denomination and nation;" 2. "consider whether the issues raised are ones *on which their own church ought to be challenged*;" 3. "prepare a report" (page 73). Nowhere in the chapter is it suggested that all this is to take place under the supervision of the deacons, let alone the consistory. If the rest of the booklet had been written from a Reformed perspective, one could possibly have given the author(s) credit that such supervision was to be assumed; lacking that perspective, one can only wonder.

Another problem within this area which caused me not to accept the author's or authors' guidance in my struggle were sentences such as: "do we support corporations, organizations and institutions, which are built *upon the backs of the poor and the hungry*?" (page 72); and "by purchasing some alternative product, could we expedite the *transfer of wealth from the rich to the poor*?" (page 68; and "we have stated earlier that the change in lifestyle which is not accompanied by a *transfer of money and/or goods to the hungry in poor nations* will not relieve starvation" (page 69). These statements make me wonder as to how far the author(s) has (have) subconsciously been influenced by today's culture, including the Marxist view promoting the desirability of the redistribution of all wealth. Where do such statements leave I Sam. 2:7, 8? "The Lord makes poor and rich; He brings low and He exalts. He raises the poor from the dust, He lifts the needy from the ash heap." And in regard to Job: Were there no poor in the country when God restored Job's fortunes and even gave him twofold? (Job 42:10); would a transfer of goods from Job to the poor to relieve starvation have been more compatible with today's reasoning? Statements *promoting* the indiscriminate redistribution of wealth make me uneasy; they leave me with just one option: the Lord does not really work all things after the counsel of His will (Eph. 1:11); rather He has given us a world we must run ourselves and we had better roll up our sleeves and improve things by transferring money and goods from the rich to the poor.

One last point: in the Bibliography one will notice that members of the CRC *are urged* to become active in an organization called BREAD FOR THE WORLD (page 98). This is the organization that produced a sacrilegious and heretical litany called "Body and Bread," which CRWRC reprinted and published last fall in preparation for the annual day of fasting and prayer. The publication of that litany led to an open apology by Mr. John De Haan, Executive Director of CRWRC, in the January 1980 *Outlook*. Are we *urged* to become members of an organization capable of producing such a heresy? Actually, one really cannot blame the author(s) of the booklet; they were only following Synod 1978's instructions: "#5. Join a national organization which will keep you informed of world hunger issues (e.g. CJL Foundation or Bread for the World)" (page 89/appendix). ●

(To be continued)

A Move Toward Congregationalism

Henry Vanden Heuvel

The Christian Reformed Synod will be faced with a variety of views and opinions on the issue of women in ecclesiastical office in the Christian Reformed Church. One of these is an overture submitted by Classis Hackensack of the CRC. It asks the Synod to permit each congregation to decide this matter for itself. Those congregations that wish to ordain women to the office of deacon may do so. Those that feel that it is unscriptural may decline to ordain them. It is in short a move toward congregationalism.

A LACK OF LEADERSHIP

The first thing that ought to be said about this overture is that it would, if enacted, be no decision at all. It would permit Synod to abrogate its responsibility as a Synod, namely to lead the denomination according to the Word of God as interpreted in the Reformed confessions. This overture removes Synod from that position of leadership.

As such, the overture is a bad one. Synod is supposed to guide the churches. It has a task of leading, and the denomination has the right to look to the Synod for such guidance. If then the Synod says that every congregation can do what it wants in this matter of women in ecclesiastical office, it is failing in its responsibility.

Unfortunately this is the direction that many people would like the Synod to go. A recent article in *The Banner* suggests that the Christian Reformed Church is large enough to accommodate both positions regarding this issue. This overture is attractive because it permits the delegates to Synod to remain on the fence. A non-decision does not force people to take a stand. But again this proposal ignores the duty of the delegates to Synod. Their calling is to lead the denomination according to the Word of God. And they should do that by making a strong stand on this issue.

An Important Precedent

There is an important implication of this overture, if it is enacted. At present there are congregations that are tending toward congregationalism in practice. Of course, our form of church polity is Presbyterian whereby the elders rule the church, and this authority is delegated to the broader assemblies of classis and Synod. All the congregations are bound

by the decisions of Synod and classis unless they are found to be incompatible with the Word of God.

Even so, there has been in recent days a move toward congregationalism on an unofficial basis. A congregation here or there makes a decision to remove a quota from the church budget. That is congregationalism. The denomination in general and Synod in particular has never sanctioned that kind of action. Indeed Synods have always maintained the importance of every congregation living up to Synod's requirements and decisions.

Until now. If Synod approves the overture from Classis Hackensack, it will be officially stating that the Christian Reformed Church at least on this issue is congregational. It will place its approval on congregations that make up their own mind on this important matter.

If this should happen, then the Synod should also take the same position regarding the matter of quotas. Many of the quotas have in recent years become a very controversial item in congregational meetings. If the Synod would permit every church to make up its own mind on women in ecclesiastical office, then Synod should also make the matter of quotas a decision to be made by every individual congregation.

But we are Presbyterian in this very crucial area of church polity. Let us not play fast and loose with this important biblical principle of church polity. Let us remain Presbyterian. Let Synod act decisively to say that women in ecclesiastical office is not scriptural. And let Synod lead our denomination in a return to the Reformed faith so that every church can enthusiastically urge its members to follow the guidance of their leaders. For if Synod does not take a decisive position on this matter of women in church office, it will be taking a very substantial step toward congregationalism that will have repercussions on many other issues before the congregations throughout the Christian Reformed Church.

Editor's Note: We may add the observation that quotas are in principle, as the Synod of 1938 said, (*Acts 1939*, p. 72) only the "amount per family recommended by the Synod to the congregations" (See also *Outlook*, Sept., 1980, p. 2) and deals with matters on which the Bible gives no specific directions. God's Word, however, speaks very plainly on the issue of who are and who are not eligible to hold office in the church (1 Tim. 2:12; 1 Cor. 14:33-38). To bind where the Bible does not and to ignore what the Bible commands is to assume what we all confess are the marks of a false church (Belgic Confession, Articles XXIX, XXXII). ●

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Is Capital Punishment Demanded?

Nicholas Vogelzang

Background

The Supreme Court on the 29th of June 1972 abolished the death penalty by a 5 to 4 vote, calling it, "cruel and unusual punishment." Since then "... at least 19 states have passed laws attempting to restore the death penalty ... the matter is pending in 15 more states." Is right and wrong so delicate that one man can determine the ethic for approximately 300 million people?

Classis Orange City in May of 1974 received an overture to appoint a committee to study the matter. It was called to limit its study to the question, "Does God's Word demand capital punishment or only permit it?"

Since then Synod's study committee of Dr. Henry Stob, Clarence Vos, Hessel Bouma III, Stephen Monsma and Louis Vos came with the result of its work to Synod of 1979 as report 29. Synod of 1981 will decide, D.V. the matter.

In sum, this is what report 29 concludes:

- a. Scripture *permits* us to use capital punishment. It does not *demand* it.
- b. That prudence demands its use only under exceptional cases. Its use should be under severe restraint and only when the very being of the state is threatened.

We believe on the basis of Gen. 8:20-9:17 that capital punishment is DEMANDED of the state.

We believe that these Scriptures are creation ordinances.

Secondly, that therefore they are universal ordinances.

Thirdly, that other arguments against capital punishment are not fundamental.

A Creation Ordinance

What is a creation ordinance?

A creation ordinance is one in which God has laid down general promises and laws affecting all men at all times and everywhere.

Does this passage contain creation ordinances? We believe so. God first gave the ordinances to Adam and then repeated and enlarged them to Noah.

1. Notice Gen. 8:21, "I will never again curse the ground because of man..." Is that a universal

promise? Has it been kept? Yes. If we believe that the flood was universal, then we must believe that the promise has been kept. The world has never again been destroyed by a flood.

2. Again we read in Gen. 8:22, "While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest ... shall not cease." Is the continual change of seasons a universal promise? Has it been kept? Yes.

3. Gen. 9:1, 7, "And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth'" repeating and strengthening it the second time. Has this been rescinded? If man should not multiply then the earth would be depopulated in a very short time. And what a blessing would result if Christians would still heed this command. As Teddy Roosevelt said, "To the birthrate belongs the spoils." Christians by their very numbers could Christianize the world.

4. Once again we read a creation ordinance. Gen. 9:2 says, "The fear of you ... shall be upon every beast of the earth ... every bird ... and upon everything that creeps ... and all the fish of the sea..." Has this ordinance ever been retracted? No! Animals and birds and fish flee from man because of fear placed by God.

5. "Every moving thing that lives shall be for food for you and as I give you green plants, I give you everything" Gen. 9:3. Is this not still in effect?

6. Gen. 9:4 contains a restriction: "Only you shall not eat flesh with its life that is its blood." This appears to be a "... prohibition against eating any living flesh, as for example, cutting the flesh from a living animal and devouring it. This has always been the mark of barbarity and is still against God's law. Cruelty to animals remains a sin." (Rev. P. Van Tuinen: *The Banner: Voices*) The ordinance was repeated at least six times to Israel. Why this ordinance? Because blood is representative of the God-given life principle receiving its highest symbolism in the death of Christ for sinners, "Justified by His blood" (Rom. 5:9). It was restated in the New at the Synod of Jerusalem, "... that the Gentiles who turn to God ... should ... abstain from the pollutions of idols and from unchastity and from what is strangled and from blood" (Acts 15:20, 29). Has this ordinance ever been altered or withdrawn?

7. What about Gen. 9:5a? "For your lifeblood I will require a reckoning; of every beast I will re-

quire it. . . ." This command was amplified to Israel when God said in Ex. 21:28 "When an ox gores a man or woman to death, the ox shall be stoned. . . ." This command is verified by the deep-seated instinct of the race. Villagers in India still today band together to seek out and slay a man-killing tiger. Even in our own country, is not instinctive anger felt when a zoo-kept lion kills a person and is shot? Are not these instances of the fact that this ordinance of God to protect His image in man is still instinctively obeyed?

If a wild or domesticated animal would forfeit its life because of the destruction of a man, how much more a rational, human being?

8. Gen. 9:5 continued, ". . . of every beast I will require it and of every man. Of every man's brother, I will require the life of man." What does the last phrase mean? The best exegetes of Scripture: Luther, Calvin, Delitzsch, Keil, J. P. Lange, Ellicott, etc., believe that this text, ". . . of every man's brother I will require the life of man" is mankind. Humanity itself is appointed the avenger of the willful murderer.

Notice the monopoleuric (one-sided) nature of this covenant ordinance. God does all the speaking and man doesn't have a word to say. God without consultation with man is telling us that the murderer must be slain. Before the commandment of the Lord of all the heavens and earth, Noah is simply silent. For God proclaims in His majestic omnipotence, "I will never again curse the ground. I will never again destroy every living creature. . . ." God says, "I will establish my covenant with you and your descendants." *It's my law, it's my covenant, it's my ordinance.*

The general ordinances to man became more specific to Israel so that even an ox that gored had to be put to death. Old covenant Israel's laws were the highest expression of God's will for His people. But by extension are not the spiritual seed of Abraham to keep these creation laws? As men of God, must we not seek to establish His ordinances throughout the world? Is it not incumbent upon us then to seek to restore the death penalty in our United States?

If we hold that these ordinances were ONLY for the Jews, under what classification would they come? Under ceremonial law? The ceremonial laws passed away with Israel as a nation. The ceremonial laws had only to do with the ceremonies of Israel's life but the taking of life for the protection of the image of God can surely not be classified as a *ceremony* on a par with the offering of incense; with the sacrifice of animals and the specifics of tabernacle construction. It is sensed immediately, is it not, that what we have here is something far more basic and fundamental than mere ceremonies of Israel's religion?

No, we cannot escape the conclusion: These are creation ordinances!

A Universal Ordinance

If Genesis 9:6 is a creation ordinance it is therefore a universal ordinance.

It is universal because the language is universal. "Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his

blood be shed; for God made man in His own image." Notice the language of universality. The words WHOEVER and MAN are universal terms. So too is the meaning of the phrase: ". . . in His own image." All men have been made in the image of God. All these are universal words.

But if one would discount the whole passage from Genesis 8:20-9:17 as applying to all men of all time and everywhere, certainly one would be forced to admit the universality of THIS particular phrase, "FOR GOD MADE MAN IN HIS OWN IMAGE."

It is our conviction that because of this paramount fact — the image of God in man and God's insistent desire to protect that image, this is why He gave the commandment to protect it. The violator of life must forfeit his life.

For is not the image of God in man a tremendously high image? The image of God in man is variously attested in Scripture and that vigorously. Each evening after God created, He pronounced His work good! But after He created man, we read, ". . . and behold, it was *very good*" (Gen. 1:31.) David in Psalm 8:5 sees a man's noble image and exclaims: "Thou hast made him a little less than God."

Rev. Peter Eldersveld said, Have you ever watched a potter at work? It's a delicate art, isn't it? He takes a lump of clay and fashions a beautiful statue out of it. You marvel at his genius. But now suppose he could make that statue live . . . well, that's what God did when he made us. That statue can walk, talk, and think, and understand; it can study the stars . . . and split the atom! Yes, and that man can know God! . . . When you go to the famous art galleries . . . where they exhibit the treasures of painting and sculpture, you may admire them . . . but you may not mutilate them. The world has nothing but contempt for people who trample the treasures of art. If the marring of a statue produces consternation, should not the destruction of God's highest creative genius?

The image of God in man: So beautiful — with so much potential . . . it *must* be protected. And God does protect it! So much so that if man ruins that high patrician image of God, God ruins him!

Because the costly blood of Christ has been shed to save that high-born image of God in man, therefore God calls us to shed the blood of anyone who despises and destroys it.

Calvin says, "This doctrine, however, is to be carefully observed that no one can be injurious to his brother *without wounding God Himself.*" In His commentary on the epistle to the Romans (Owens, p. 481) Calvin's comment is this, ". . . if the Lord by arming the magistrate has also committed to him the use of the sword, whenever he visits the guilty with death, by executing God's vengeance, he obeys his commands. *Contend then they do with God who think it unlawful to shed the blood of wicked men.*" So capital punishment is not a matter of private vengeance but of divine justice as administered in the name of God.

Hence Jesus also says, ". . . all who take the sword will perish by the sword" (Mt. 26:52). God Himself, if governments do not protect human life, protects it by his threat to the murderer.

The Apostle Paul adds his witness to the sword in Genesis 9:6 by implying that there are offenses worthy of death, for he says in Acts 25:11, "... if then I am a wrong-doer, and have committed anything for which I deserve to die, I do not seek to escape death..." Paul believes in capital punishment.

The enormity of the crime of destroying the image of God is not simply that it produces pain and deprivation to the individual and loss to society — but that it is assailing the image of God, the distinguishing essence of humanity. The murderer has allied himself with that "great demonic homicide who is called... a manslayer from the beginning" (John 8:44). Satan is a slaughterer of God's image.

As Dr. Taylor Lewis (in J.P. Lange) succinctly remarks, "The image of God is universal, the language is universal, the reason is universal, the consequences of impunity are universal."

Arguments Against Capital Punishment are Unconvincing

Some have asked, "If Genesis 9:6 reveals God's demand for the death penalty, why was Cain allowed to live?"

Rightly understood, the example of Cain argues for the death penalty. After his murder Cain declared his fear that the first person he met would slay him. How did this enter his mind? God Himself had written it on the tablets of his heart. He had placed it in the instincts of the human race as a rec-

ognized principle from the beginning. The murderer shall not live. But God interfered and saved his life. Quite true. But, if God had not interfered, his life would have been justly taken in obedience to the general laws of God, implanted in the consciences of all men. Therefore, unless God similarly interferes now by a specially marked revelation, the original rule holds and the murderer is to be put to death. God "set a mark on Cain," because without this he was liable to death. Everyone knew instinctively that the murderer had to be put to death.

Another argument advanced against capital punishment is that we thereby remove all possibility of repentance of the sinner and hence his hope of redemption. But this charge is unfounded. Receiving the death sentence may be exactly the means that God uses to bring him to repentance and salvation. The death penalty is not "... a foreclosure of this grace of God for him." It may be just the opposite.

It is charged that the poor and ignorant are the only ones who suffer capital punishment. The rich escape death by legal devices. We should see to it that everyone, rich or poor, experiences the same treatment. Justice must be improved, not abandoned.

It is argued that Genesis 9:6 makes no distinction between kinds of murders. But the Bible is not a judicial handbook. It reveals God's general laws.

We believe that God's Word demands the death penalty for those who murder in the first degree, that is, for coldly calculated (premeditated) murder by morally responsible individuals. ●



BIBLICAL CRITICISM AT CALVIN

Dear Editor:

Lately, quite a bit of attention in *The Outlook* has been given to what is being taught at Calvin College. Since I have recently taken a course there that dealt with the women-in-church-office issue that disturbed me somewhat, and was representative of the other religion and theology classes I have taken there, I think that it is important to summarize what occurred in the class. First, the issue of women-in-church-office was not supposed to be studied as an end in itself, but rather as a means of looking at various principles of Biblical interpretation and hermeneutics.

The professor began by stating his belief that the Bible is the infallible Word of God; the problem, he said, was determining what the Bible meant to the people to whom it was written and then determining how it is to be applied to us today. So several methods of interpretation were considered in regard to a specific Bible passage (the story of Balaam). Though I largely agreed with what was said in this part of the course, several emphases especially bothered me. First, there was a great deal of criticism of "doctrine" as a hindrance to the proper interpretation of God's Word ("we are not to use verses in this story as proofs for our doctrines, such as God's unchangeableness.") Second, little time was spent in studying the higher critical and neo-orthodox methods of interpretation since these were not considered to be problems our church would be likely to face. However, the use of scholarship employed by these methods to determine the cultural background to a text was emphasized as a very positive feature. So the "best method" for interpreting Scripture requires a thorough knowledge of the latest scholarly findings about the cultural background of the text. When this method of interpretation is used in light of what is known and conjectured about the culture of Paul's day, then the passages that deal with the proper behavior of men and women in the church and home come to be seen as merely a response to specific problems in the churches of Ephesus and Corinth aris-

ing out of heathen practices prevalent in those cities. Hence, our views towards the position of men and women in the church and home should be formed from the principles of total "equality" in Christ, mutual submission and the broadest possible use of all members' gifts, rather than on the Ephesians, Corinthians, I Timothy, and I Peter passages. To many in the class this argument was very convincing. But, sad to say, the professor tried to avoid looking at the consequences of this method of hermeneutics when it is applied to other questions facing the church. For this method of hermeneutics has also been used to condemn our church's stand on homosexuality (See "Voices" in the 2/9/81 *Banner*). And I cannot see how a person using this method of interpretation could argue against another person who used this method to defend the practice of divorce, or fornication, or to argue that parents really have no authority over their children. After all, all of the verses on these subjects (and many others) were written out of a specific cultural context and one could certainly find specific problems in which these verses may have been written. The limits on just how far we are to go with this hermeneutics and what subjects are "off limits" were not discussed. (So apparently it depends on the ideas of the interpreter.)

Another thing that I did not like about the class was that of all three of the outside speakers planned for the class were strong supporters of the movement to put women

in church office, and it took a request to the professor to get in a speaker who represented the other point of view. Furthermore, the two books used by the class that dealt with issue were also in favor of women-in-church-office. All-in-all, I found the presentation of the entire course was rather biased and one-sided. Some of the arguments presented by conservatives were not adequately dealt with either. Nor was any distinction drawn between what the Bible means by equality and the modern concept of "equality" which was born out of the French Revolution. In addition, the professor made it clear that he believed authority (of husbands, say) and equality (with mutual submission) were completely incompatible, and that one must choose between the two. Similarly, "head-ship" was characterized as not implying any authority whatsoever (even in the case of Christ and His church); rather, it was declared to imply only mutual dependence, a position of service to others.

Another argument put forth for the "liberation" of women in church and home is that much of the rest of the "Christian community" is doing it. To insist on a narrow interpretation of the Scripture in light of the fact that many large Baptist, Lutheran, and Presbyterian denominations in the U.S., and some of the large Reformed denominations abroad have found that Scripture does not teach the "exclusion" of women from church office. I was especially disturbed by the fact that no consideration was given to the spiritual condition of many of these churches, nor was any recognition made of the fact that many have repudiated vital doctrines and spirituality.

The problem with all this is that many in the class apparently believed everything that was said. This has also characterized some of my other religion courses at Calvin. And, I must say, that I have found a fundamental difference between what I have been taught in theology at Calvin, and what I learned in catechism, and at home, and hear from the pulpit on Sundays. My question is, if many of the "new ideas" currently being taught at Calvin become widely accepted in our church, and are more fully developed in the years to come, what will our church have left in 50 years?

Sincerely,
Dave Van Dyke
Hudsonville, MI

WHICH TRANSLATION? (January (OUTLOOK))

Dear Rev. De Jong:

Your article on Bible translations in the January issue of *The Outlook* has been brought to my attention. Since Dr. Edwin Palmer is no longer with us, I feel constrained to respond.

You wrote: "Translations are authoritative only in the measure that they are faithful to the original." But faithfulness is a double-edged sword, for true faithfulness in translation means being faithful not only to the original language but also to the "target" or "receptor" language. That is precisely what we attempted to produce in the NIV — just the right balance between accuracy and the best contemporary idiom. I personally classify all other translations as either accurate but not contemporary

enough or contemporary but not accurate enough. In the NIV our objective was to cut between these two types of versions and produce one with reasonable balance and so make a unique contribution to the field of standard English versions of the Bible. Hopefully, we have succeeded.

You maintained that the NIV "tends to be considerably freer than others in departing from the word and sentence structure of the original texts." There is a reason for this, though I would change "considerably freer" to "slightly freer." Because thought patterns and syntax differ from one language to another, faithful communication of the meaning of the Biblical writers often requires changes in sentence structure and appropriate regard for the contextual nuances of words.

You noted that Dr. Bastiaan Van Elderen "objected to the synod approving the NIV for church use because it was less a word for word translation than the RSV was. The reason for its free translation he saw was its acceptance of what is called the principle of 'dynamic equivalence.'" You also indicated that "one must question whether a version employing the principle of dynamic equivalence can be used liturgically in the church." You concluded that "despite the orthodox dedication of the translators the influence of the modern dynamic equivalence theory . . . prevented them from achieving the definitive English version . . . for which we hoped." First, it always surprises me when conservatives quote approvingly any scholar's tacit endorsement of the RSV — particularly in the Old Testament, where the RSV freely emends the Masoretic (or traditional Hebrew) Text. Second, I am certain that all the other translators and editors of the NIV would join me in categorically denying that we accepted the principle of dynamic equivalence. Classifying translations according to type is a difficult task, but here is my attempt: 1) literal: KJV, ASV, NASB, RSV (?); 2) dynamic equivalence: NEB, TEV; 3) mediating or idiomatic (between the two previous categories): NIV; 4) paraphrase: LB; and 5) amplification: Amplified Bible.

Finally, you referred to Van Bruggen's correct contention that "reliable translation demands (1) faithfulness to form, (2) clarity, (3) completeness, (4) loyalty to the text, (5) spirituality, (6) authoritativeness and (7) ecclesiastical usage." Allowing for the fact that "loyalty to the text" must be balanced with "clarity" in English, Van Bruggen has, in my opinion, perfectly described the NIV!

You have my permission to publish this reply, and I would greatly appreciate it if, in fairness, you would publish it.

May our Lord bless you abundantly and use your ministry for His own glory.

Cordially yours, in Christ,
Kenneth L. Barker
General Editor, NIV
Study Bible
Executive Secretary, NIV
Committee on Bible
Translation
New York International
Bible Society
144 Tices Lane
East Brunswick, NJ 08816

Editor's Reply

I appreciate and gladly place this response of Dr. Barker who has replaced our friend, Edwin H. Palmer, as General Editor of the NIV Study Bible.

I am well aware of the faults and particularly the liberal bias of the Revised Standard Version of the Bible. In fact, it was a recognition of those RSV faults that prompted the 1956 overture from the First Christian Reformed Church of Seattle of which I was the pastor to the CR Synod to begin working for a better modern, translation by evangelical/scholars. Dr. Palmer repeatedly pointed out that it was this initiative which in the Lord's Providence eventually produced the New International Version.

Naturally, we who had a role in this beginning watched the development with more than average interest. When it appeared although I was happy with its smoothness and easy readability, I was uneasy about the freedom of its translation. The book of Dr. Van Bruggen (as well as the criticism of Dr. Van Elderen) connects this free translation with the prevailing influence of the modern "dynamic equivalence" theory of translation. That this version, although to a lesser degree than others, sometimes chooses for easy reading rather than literal accuracy is especially obvious when one looks at its translation of the letters of Paul and notices the tendency to cut Paul's sometimes long and complicated sentences into shorter ones. Van Bruggen observes (*The Future of the Bible*, pp.100,101) that when Paul wrote very long sentences "he had a reason. In such sentences are described the riches of the Christian faith." "These long sentences, though difficult, contain many nuances of meaning that could be expressed in no other way. Therefore the translator must strive to reproduce them as closely as possible. When such sentences are split up into short sentences, some of the meaning is lost." One may say that in shortening Paul's sentences he is only translating Greek into modern English, but this is incorrect. One can write short sentences in Greek as well as in English. In shortening Paul's long sentences to make easier and more pleasing reading one is really no longer translating but interpreting.

I do not want to exaggerate this point but believe that we have to consider it in trying to evaluate translations. I appreciate the carefulness of the NIV, make extensive use of it and encourage others to do the same. Others responded to this article by sending pamphlets some of which argue that the King James Version is the only proper English translation. This could be a subject for future writings or reactions.

PDJ

The Legacy of Lennon (April OUTLOOK)

Dear Pastor De Jong,

I want to personally thank you for putting the article in on John Lennon. He really was painted with the wrong colors after his death. The article was superb.

Daniel K. Tennant
Bainbridge, N.Y.

The Legacy of Lennon (April OUTLOOK)

Dear Outlook Magazine,

In regard to the John Lennon article, I would like to say the following. Where is your compassion? Everything in this article points out his weaknesses, his faults and his failures. Didn't Jesus come to heal the sick, not the healthy? Or is it so hard for us to touch anything that isn't clean? Shouldn't we be praying for these kinds of people, not telling them they're sinners, and then condemning them?

I do not want to make him out to be a saint. At the same time, I do not want to judge him, for if you want to throw out Bible verses like dice, remember 1 Cor. 5:12: "For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge?" In the same chapter we are told we can't withdraw from all immoral men because then we would have to withdraw from the world. Somewhere along the way we have to learn to touch that which we consider unpleasant, whether we touch a dying patient in a hospital, or a bloodied auto victim along the roadside, a crack man, or a hill-billy.

We Christians can be very hard on each other. You say John Lennon gave out universal hate; how often haven't we bickered among ourselves over minor issues — the sermon was too long, or the songs too modern, or sideburns, or the cleanliness of communion cups — at the expense of the gospel. Until we learn to love each other, the world will not be impressed.

John Lennon was a news maker — a celebrity — one who makes the news simply by having eggs for breakfast. His death was a loss, because he was a human being, as are your black neighbors who were killed in Atlanta. Secondly, he was a creative person. He did have talent, and really creative people have always had a hard time fitting into society which does have a tendency to mold and mass-produce ideas. Even classical musicians have their quirks. It's not just rock stars. People have extra marital affairs — Mozart as well, but would you condemn Mozart too?

As for his famous Jesus quote from 1966, when was Jesus popular — is that our goal to make Jesus "in"? If you read the gospels, you will find he had many followers when it came to free food and miracles, but where were they at his crucifixion?

I do not approve of everything he did, but at the same time I wanted him to grow as a person, which you apparently did not. Many of the quotes given were out-dated — things he did say, but later changed his mind. Consider this: You said he beat his wife, but you didn't quote from his song *Getting Better*: "Man I was mean, but I'm changing my scene . . . its getting better all

the time." Or this quote from a *Newsweek* interview late 1980: . . . Sean will be five and I wanted to give five solid years of being there all the time. I hadn't seen my first son, Julian, grow up . . . I was on tour. There's a price to pay for inattention to children . . ."

It doesn't seem to me that a person setting forth universal hate would give benefit concerts for muscular dystrophy; it doesn't seem to me that a person setting forth universal hate would take 1,000 fruit baskets and fill each one with \$30 worth of fruit and give them to old folks' homes for Thanksgiving, nor would one give \$1,000 to the NYPD. Or didn't you read about these?

I was very disappointed in your article. Why did it get included or written so far after his death? Why not just wait a year?

John Lennon is dead. And all you can do is throw stones.

Don Vander Haar
1918 Menominee Rd., S.E.
Grand Rapids, MI 49506

Reply:

Don, I do not know exactly from where you are coming because I do not know you. I may be missing your point, but I would like to respond to your comments. I wish we could sit down and talk together rather than discuss this on these pages.

I do not think that the issue is compassion for Lennon or others. I agree with you that we are often very hard on people both in the church and outside the church. Neither is the issue whether or not Lennon did some good things in his life. Everyone does this regardless of his degree of depravity. The issue, as I see it, is that for which Lennon stood, what he taught and lived, his value system. Lennon, through his public life on the stage and song writing, set forth, in the main, a wrong system of values as judged in the light of the Bible. The sad thing about that is that millions of people were influenced by this. Not only did Lennon do this, but many people in music and theatre have done this and are still doing this today.

The point I was trying to make was that Jesus gives us the right set of values, and these are values that sharply contradict what Lennon and others set forth. People should make Jesus their Lord and not Lennon. To defend Lennon's emphasis is like defending Las Vegas. We have the example of Jesus pointing out the bad leaven of the Pharisees, Paul warning about the corrupting influence of people, and John telling us to test the spirits. We as Christians today must be critical and stand in judgment about things that are ungodly in our world.

Maybe Lennon was converted later in life as you seem to suggest. If that is so, we

can only rejoice about this. But what I have heard and read does not seem to suggest that.

I hope this helps to clarify my approach.

Rev. Norman B. Haan
Waupun, Wisc.

That "Last Year at Calvin Seminary"

At my examination by classis in Grand Rapids, 1923, Dr. Henry Meeter asked me "where did you get that idea?" The response was: "That should not make any difference." This was not challenged by Dr. Meeter or by the chairman. There was recognition of freedom in the acquisition of theological knowledge — doctrine.

Such is not the case in the requirement that a candidate for the ministry in the Christian Reformed denomination must have taken his last year of training at Calvin seminary. This requirement should be cancelled. Why?

1. The requirement violates freedom in the acquisition of theological knowledge — sound doctrine.

2. It implies that Calvin Seminary is the custodian of the truth — sound doctrine (of sound teachers also?) and that training at another Reformed school is not acceptable as wholly reliable.

3. It is unrealistic. Will one year of study at Calvin Seminary make or break a student's theological convictions?

4. It is self-centered. It questions other Reformed theological training, and amounts to narrow denominationalism. Is only our Christian Reformed training wholly reliable.

5. It amounts to a sort of church discipline where it does not belong. The acid test of a sound theological position is not where one is trained, but the passing of the examination by classes before ordination.

In short: More freedom in theological training would prevent "rebellious" experimentation at the expense of a sound ministry in our churches and loyalty to our denomination (in which there is considerable dissatisfaction with some of its management in these things).

Paul De Koekkoek
Seattle, Washington

The Christian Reformed Church has a rule since 1924 (*Acts of Synod, 1924*, p. 38) that students having studied theology at other seminaries shall at least take the senior year at our seminary before they shall be declared eligible for call in our churches. Rev. Paul De Koekkoek, retired C. R. minister living at Seattle, Washington, calls attention to some objections to this rule. (Reportedly the issue will arise at the June synod.)

— Editor