



THE OUTLOOK

DEVOTED TO THE EXPOSITION AND DEFENSE OF THE REFORMED FAITH

JANUARY 1987

Our Ecumenical Crisis

**Machen on
Fundamentalism**

**Needed:
Christian Activists**

The Four Horsemen in 1987

John Blankespoor

“And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures saying as with a loud voice of thunder, Come. And I saw and behold a white horse, and he that sat thereon had a bow, and there was given unto him a crown, and he came forth conquering and to conquer And another horse came forth, a red horse, and to him that sat thereon was given to take peace from the earth And I saw, and behold a black horse and I heard a voice saying, a measure of wheat for a shilling and three measures of barley for a shilling And I saw a pale horse, and he that sat thereon, his name was Death, and Hades followed with him” (Rev. 6:1-8).

A new year has arrived. Something new may differ from the old. A new year hopefully will bring with it new and better things. The old was not satisfactory, not what men wanted it to be. That's why people wish each other a happy new year.

But we know what the wise Solomon said centuries ago. “What has been will be again, and what has been done will be done again. There is nothing new under the sun,” (Eccl. 1:9). That doesn't mean that we shouldn't try to change what is wrong, where we can. But it does mean that man, no man, is going to change the world fundamentally. There will always be sin in this world, with all its distressing results. In fact sin will increase as the years roll by. And with this, increase also the inevitable results.

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The scripture passage before us introduces the opening of the seals in the book which John saw in his vision. This book contains God's decrees concerning all that must take place on the earth. These seals in the book represent forces and events that come from these Divine decrees. The things spoken of happen when the seals are opened in all of history. They have been here throughout the entire New Testament history and will be here in 1987. And they will continue until the end of time. The one difference is that as time goes on and we approach the end of time, these forces will become more prominent and effective.

John sees in the vision first of all a white horse. Horses in the Bible were strong. They were the strongest force man could use at that time. Israel was forbidden to have horses; they might put their trust in them. This horse was white. A victorious king or general returning from the battle front often entered his home country riding on a white horse. It symbolizes victory. Here the rider on the white horse has a bow in his hand, which symbolizes warfare and fighting. But the rider also has a crown on his head. This means that he is victorious. He is victorious not only after a battle, but while he goes into battle and continues on this course. He goes forth conquering and to conquer.

What does all this mean? The rider on the horse can represent only one person, the Lord Jesus Christ. Often we read that he is the conquering One, He is the Lamb that conquers. In Revelation we also read that He has conquered. Putting everything together, we get the picture of the exalted Lord Jesus Christ, ruling the world and always being victorious. He always rules all of history, peoples and nations. He always also rules over the devil and his angels. Satan has much power. But even that is controlled by God through our Lord Jesus Christ, who rides the white horse. When the devil tempts us, the Lord uses him, making the temptations trials, for the refining of our faith even as gold is refined. Throughout all time Christ rides the white horse; He is the only Lord, always victorious, always conquering, never losing. So it will be until the end of time.

There follows the description of three other horses. Of none of these do we read that they go forth conquering and to conquer. Each one, however, does have power, in fact much power. With that power, each is galloping through the world at all times, also in 1987. At the same time Christ, the horseman on the white horse, is mentioned first, and is Lord of them all. The rider on the red horse was given power to take peace from the earth and to make men slay each other. Red is the color of blood. This red horse brings about war. How many wars there have been — hundreds of them, causing an untold amount of bloodshed. One of the seals means that also this horse comes from God's decree. Because of sin, the Lord “brings” or “allows” war to take place.

This may occur in the coming year. Although we may hope that the attempts of our president will be more successful in trying to reach agreements with Russia regarding arms production, this does not mean that all war will cease and that perhaps at some future time we will have a just and lasting peace on this earth. According to the Bible, this will never take place. The red horse will keep on running throughout the world and during all of time.

The third horse is black. This rider suggests want. Here it evidently refers to physical want. The third horseman represents an irresistible force, issuing from God's decree (the sealed book) and directed by Christ (who opens the seals) causing and bringing about want. The horseman appears as a merchant, or vendor. He holds a pair of balances in his hand. A voice cries, "A measure of wheat for a penny and three measures of barley for a penny." A penny was a day's wages for a laborer (Matt. 20:9). A measure of wheat, or three measures of barley were considered to be just enough for one person for one day. All this therefore likely symbolizes having just enough for one day. On the other hand, oil and wine symbolize abundance, luxury, riches. And these might not "be hurt," damaged. A contrast is pictured, between the rich that live in abundance and the masses of poor that live by the day. Such conditions will therefore prevail throughout all times, as the rider on the black horse rides in the world.

There is a fourth horse, whose color is pale. Pale-green is the color of a corpse, of physical death, and the rider's name is Death. He has the power to kill by various means, the sword, hunger, the beasts of the earth, but also through germs. The fourth horse, therefore, represents a mighty force that brings about death. Included also in this is the power that brings about calamities, diseases and all kinds of catastrophes that bring death.

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The three horses, the red, black and pale, represent God's judgments upon mankind. They have always been in the world, and are here today. They will continue to run their course until the end of time in response to man's sin.

By these judgments man is called to repent. We don't read that there specifically. But we do read several times in the book of Revelation after much was said about judgments, that people repented not. This implies that God does call men to repent with these three horses riding throughout the world. He also calls us to repent. (How different this often is from what we see in people, also in our times. When calamities overtake us we are encouraged to pray that they are removed. Also to "prayer chains", this often is the only prayer.) How fitting it would be that we also urge each other to repent before the Lord and pray for spiritual growth as well as physical welfare. The dreaded realities of war with all it implies, the terrible experience of hunger, poverty and want,

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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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and the ever present possibility of death, which eventually will conquer all of us, should make us turn to the Lord in repentance and faith.

As these three horses are a general description of history and what God is bringing upon man because of sin, we must never forget the white horseman. Jesus Christ is always victorious. He was and always will be Lord of the universe and history, as well as of His Church in a special way. His cause really never suffers defeat. He is always "successful" and victorious. Our only hope is to believe in Him and to belong to Him and His church. May God give us grace that we may put all our trust in Him. Ps. 72 is being fulfilled.

"Christ shall have dominion over land and sea."
The coming year will bring nothing really new.

What has been will be. The one thing that will be new is the mercy of God in Christ Jesus every day again. That faithful love will never fail. May we learn to love Him more, trust in Him more, be better witnesses of His wonderful truth that He is always riding the white horse of victory. And may it all give us wonderful peace in our heart!

The works of the red, black and pale horses are God's answer to sinful man. And what a frightening and scary place this world has become. But how thankful we should be that we may know the truth and that we may always keep our eyes focused on that white horse and its rider.

And as we trust in Him, He will give us the victory, in our hearts today, and in 1987, and perfectly when He returns upon the clouds.

An Alliance is What the Word Says

A Further Assessment of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches And Its Theology

Marten H. Woudstra

One of the good decisions to come out of the Synod of 1985 was that it postponed making a decision about membership in the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC, for short). It would have been even better if the Synod had decided not to join at all. There were people on the advisory committee who were prepared to advise the Synod to do just that. Instead, Synod decided to ask the Interchurch Relations Committee to provide the church with more information about WARC, such as the identity of member churches, and the content of its recent position papers. Synod also noted that the matter of a proposed "Ecumenical Charter" will come before the Synod of 1987. Presumably, if some sort of charter is then adopted, it will set forth the ecumenical principles which will guide the church in years to come. In the light of these principles other decisions can then be made.

Just in passing, this shows the vital importance for all consistories and classes to be alert regarding the nature of any ecumenical charter the church may adopt. Just about everything about the future direction our denomination will be taking will depend on how this charter is worded. I am sure that appeal to it will be made again and

again. The 1985 synodical decision gives us at least some room to discuss. That's what is good about it.

As to the first concern of the 1985 Synod, that of the identity of WARC's member churches, it always has seemed passing strange to this observer that the CRC has never been apprised of the actual membership of WARC. Just think, since 1972 we have been studying this organization. Observers have participated in its theological commissions, yet, even more, more than a year after having been requested to provide this information, the IRC continues to hide it from the church. It is kept a deeply hidden secret, until the time, presumably, when the IRC chooses to bring the matter again before a next synod. I totally fail to understand such an approach. Is not the cause of ecumenicity the concern of the church as a whole? Why then act as if the exact identity of WARC's membership is classified information to which only the IRC has privileged access? Or is the IRC afraid that suddenly our elders in the Dakotas or in New England will wake up to the fact that from here on they will be expected to "further" the faithful proclamation of the Word of God with denominations such as the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, and the

arch-liberal United Church of Christ? See the "Purposes" of WARC (Acts, 1985, p. 232).

Yet, this is what we will be pledged to do when we join with WARC. We will be expected to further all endeavors to proclaim the Word of God faithfully with churches who, by the IRC's own admission, cover the whole range of the "theological spectrum." All "theological options" are represented among its membership (Acts, 1985, p. 227). One of our long-time observers at the WARC theological commission meetings has stated clearly that "a review of the materials published by WARC over the past years would reveal a considerable content that we would find objectionable." (Acts, p. 227). Still we are urged to join this alliance of churches so that together with all these churches, whose positions we will find objectionable at many a point, we will further the faithful proclamation of the Word, as well as the work of evangelism, mission and stewardship. These are commitments we will make when we join. But how can we make them if we know that our "allies" are not faithful to the Word themselves? Does ecumenicity happen in an "Alice-in-Wonderland" atmosphere? Does one defend the faith together with those who are betraying the faith?

Part of the difficulty in this whole matter comes from the fact that there are those who think they can make a **forum** out of what clearly is more than that — it is an **alliance** of churches. The IRC report urging the church to join WARC uses the word "forum" here and there in its description of WARC. But this world clearly is a misnomer. Admittedly, the word "alliance" is sometimes used in a very loose way, as is evidenced by newspaper usage and otherwise. Certain groups that have a common interest, even though otherwise divided, may temporarily form an alliance to promote certain common concerns. I understand that in California recently some extreme conservatives and some feminist groups have jointly picketed pornography shops. The papers called such a joint endeavor an unexpected "alliance."

WARC does not fit this sort of loose description of the word. It wants to be viewed as an Alliance of Reformed Churches. In other words, it is not the kind of alliance the Christian Reformed Church can join rather loosely, in order then to "witness" to the Reformed faith within its ranks. Say as we may among ourselves that WARC's member churches are not quite kosher, soon we will find out that we must toe the inclusivist line which the organization has had from its very inception in 1875. From the very beginning, WARC and its antecedents have looked upon any merely "confessional" organization as "narrow." Marcel Pradervand, long-time General Secretary of WARC, says in his book: *A Century of Service*, that the "founders of the Alliance had no narrow Reformed spirit and they were anxious to bring together all Evangelical Christians" (p. 25). This same inclusivism is echoed again and again in the Alliance's pages and pronouncements.

This is what we will be committing ourselves to when we join. To be sure, for some in our church, this will be exactly the reason for joining. I have heard prayers said and remarks made in sermons in recent years that show how some ministers consider the differences between churches, including even the Roman Catholic Church, to be negligible. The proposed Ecumenical Charter as printed in the Acts of the 1985 Synod also contains some inclusivistic statements. It argues that matters of worship, theology and church order are in many ways determined by local and regional concerns of the churches. To one's utter surprise, on the next page of the proposed document, the committee state that, as we seek rapprochement with Reformed Churches, we must insist that these churches be Reformed not just in confession and polity and the like, but also in actual practice. This in itself true statement comes at the end of a document which at its beginning has practically thrown all reasons for being Reformed in confession and practice over board. If all is only a matter of region, locality and national origin, what reason do we have to insist that the Pope give up his devotion to Mary, episcopal churches surrender their hierarchical polity and the Methodists and others their Arminianism?

But what about the argument that once we are in WARC we will "witness" within it? It strikes me that the idea of witnessing to an organization whose basic principles one has accepted in good faith is purely illusory. To enter into an "alliance" means to agree with the alliance's purposes and aims. In this case it means that we will agree that the Reformed faith, when insisted upon in its confessional preciseness, will be a hindrance rather than a help in the work of the Alliance. Pradervand's book abounds with statements which show that the WARC constituents and its spokesmen have no use for what they perjoratively call "ecclesiasticism." This is true of the whole ecumenical movement of the World Council type. At the heart and basis of these movements lie the para-church movements of the 19th century, the Young Men's Christian Association and the World Student Federation. This is why ecclesiology, the doctrine of the church, has been such a difficult subject precisely in organizations which seek to bring **churches** together.

This dilemma, as I see it, cannot be solved by first setting up some broad and ill-defined "universal church" concept, of which, presumably, the denominations are then but small particles. Indeed, the church is wider than the denomination. Still, as even some leading ecumenicists have said repeatedly, ecumenicity, begins at home. In our local church we must catch some of the vision of what it means to be church of Jesus Christ, confessing the full gospel of salvation according to the Scriptures and the Creeds, and inviting all who are likeminded to join us in a common cause.

The IRC seeks to link its advice to join WARC with an appeal to the Report on Ecumenicity of 1944, but at the same time it repudiates what I consider to be the heart of that report. We must, said the 1944 Report, "labor in love" with all the churches in the world, non-Reformed Reformed churches, Protestant churches more generally, and also the RC and Orthodox Churches. But that Report also insisted that the churches which are not now Reformed should be brought to a better understanding so that they too would want to be Reformed in faith and practice. Granted, a seemingly impossible task. But, so I would add emphatically, **not** one that is prompted by Pharisaical "know-it-all" attitudes, or by a feeling of smug superiority. What have you, says the apostle, that you have not received? If that attitude of humility should guide us, and if in the meantime we should wake up to what it means to be Church of Jesus Christ, locally and denominationally, who knows what great things God can still do through us?

For the CRC to join an organization such as WARC is therefore to engage in an act of futility. We will be asked to surrender at the outset that which we secretly say to ourselves we want to accomplish. In the meantime we have "allied" ourselves with leading liberal churches, such as the United Church of Christ in the USA, to further the Alliance's common goals.

The IRC has undergone a notable shift in the many years it has engaged the CRC with WARC. In the beginning, when the notion of WARC participation was first broached, the IRC still spoke frankly of cooperating with a group in which both orthodox and liberal churches worked together. But in 1985 there suddenly are no liberal churches left in WARC. There are only "less conservative" and "more conservative" churches. See Acts, 1985, p. 227. This certainly shows a remarkable shift in the IRC's thinking. I hope and pray it is not indicative of a shift in the church's thinking.

And what about WARC's theology? A longtime observer at the meetings of the theological commission has warned us that its publications in recent years contain much that we will find "objectionable." Can one really "ally" the church of Jesus Christ with an organization that entertains and publishes error?

It is the **church** that is at stake. WARC is an **alliance of churches**, both components ought to receive equal stress. As a church we stand committed to teach the truths of the confessions and also to refute everything that militates against sound doctrine. See the Formula of Subscription. How then can we enter into an alliance knowing that this alliance publishes error?

The IRC seeks to solve this by working with the distinction of the 1944 Report, a report whose basic thrust they have actually repudiated, but whose terminology seems useful for the defense of the committee's proposal to join. Hence we are told that we will be joining with churches of

"circle two," i.e., the non-Reformed Reformed churches. The problem with this approach is that WARC itself knows nothing of such a distinction, and does not want to have anything to do with it. So when we join — something I hope will never happen — there will be a big laugh in the Geneva headquarters. The crucial decision to join will have been made, and the rest will speedily be forgotten. It has to be, if WARC is going to function at all upon its present basis.

Presumably the IRC is carefully studying the documents of WARC to see what the Alliance really teaches. This is what it has been asked to do by the 1985 Synod. The question arises, does the IRC, in the nominations it submits for new members on the committee, consider a thorough theological training essential for membership? Modern theology is very subtle. Truth and error are not nearly as easily distinguished as in the days of the older liberalism.

An attempt to infuse some new blood in the IRC's ranks, which was made at the 1985 Synod, did not get anywhere. Dr. Norman Shephard's name had been proposed from the floor. To be sure, this nomination did cause a run-off election between him and an incumbent. But the incumbent won. Just as the vote was in progress the chairman of synod's advisory committee, the Rev. Rodger Buining, who had struggled long and hard with the IRC materials in committee, said on the floor of synod: "We felt in the committee that the IRC's membership is too much the same kind." Such a remark could, of course, not go unchallenged. Mercy be! Imagine anyone nominated from the floor of the assembly which does the electing getting into the IRC! Not that! So, as the voting was in progress, the Stated Clerk, *ex officio* member of the IRC, arose and said that, "it wasn't so." The IRC, he said, was trying its best to get different people. "Just look," he said, "we also have women on the committee." As if the Rev. Buining had spoken of all members being of the same gender!

I am trying to maintain a fraternal spirit in all of this, but I think it is easy to see how difficult this is when one considers episodes of this sort. I have just returned from a meeting of the General Assembly of the OPC. What a vast difference in nomination and election procedures between that Assembly and our Synod! Granted, the OPC is much smaller than the CRC. But there is much to be said for the completely open nomination procedures I witnessed there.

And what to say of the fact that in the same denomination which has said "no" to the WCC, the membership of its Interchurch Relations includes two members who are known to have **favored** WCC membership, or who at least have declared that they find such membership compatible with being a Reformed church such as the CRC? Will the real Christian Reformed Church please stand up!

A final word on the theological position of the WARC in its publications: The IRC report says

that WARC represents all "theological options" and covers the whole "theological spectrum." The word "spectrum" comes from the realm of physics. When a beam of light gets refracted in a prism it produces a beautiful spectrum. Wonderful, isn't it? Or take the colors of the rainbow. Do we not marvel at that "spectrum"? I believe therefore that to speak of a theological "spectrum" will not help us in sorting truth from error. Yet, the IRC is fond of the word. It holds that "all perceptions of biblical truth are incomplete" and hence it warns against "the judgment that we possess the truth in all its fullness" (Proposed Ecumenical Charter, Acts, p. 238). Put these words next to the Formula of Subscription which all office bearers have signed! In the proposed Ecumenical Charter, up for a decision at the coming synod, the idea of error is reduced to just one phrase, where it is called a "distortion" of biblical truth. (Acts, '85, p. 239). Even that euphemism is not enough. For the committee puts things in more comparative terms. It is ready to reject only those "perceptions" that "so distort biblical truth that our witness to Jesus Christ is hindered," etc. Note the little word "so." In other words, there are probably many distortions of truth, but we will live with them. Only those that are **so** bad that they hinder, etc., will be rejected by us. I find this language completely alien to the Scriptures. It seems to come straight from some WCC manual. The Bible speaks of error, of false teaching, of wolves that seek to devour the flock of Christ. There is nothing relativizing about that.

I will conclude with just one example of how I think the theological pronouncements published under WARC auspices are faulty. In a book of Theological Studies of WARC, published under the name *A Christian Declaration on Human Rights* in 1977, Professor Allen O. Miller, chairperson of the North American Area Theological Committee of the WARC, calls both the story of creation and the story of the fall a "myth" (p. 152). I know full well that this word when used today does not mean that there is not truth in these stories. But they certainly must not be regarded as history. This is contrary to the statement attributed to the Faculty of Calvin Seminary who are holding without exception that there was an **historical** fall into sin. Will the Seminary Faculty rise up and protest to a man our entering into WARC?

An Alliance is what the word says. WARC is not a forum. If it were, we might participate in it with some profit. It is an alliance which demands of its member churches the surrender of anything that is exclusive or distinctive about their confessions and their church polity. It is a potent arm of World Council Ecumenicity, advising its member churches in 1948 to join with the WCC. Membership in WARC will surely lead the Christian Reformed Church down the path of a gradual loss of its identity as a confessionally Reformed church. And may God have mercy on us all.

Dr. M.W. Woudstra is a retired Professor of Old Testament at Calvin Theological Seminary.

Machen on "Fundamentalism"

Some recent questions about the fitness of the word "Fundamentalism" to designate our orthodox Christian convictions recall the remarks of the great evangelical Presbyterian leader, J. Gresham Machen, reported in his 1954 biography by Ned B. Stonehouse (Eerdmans, publisher).

When he was offered the presidency of the proposed Bryan Memorial University in 1927, he wrote of his profound appreciation of the offer, saying, "In these days of widespread defection from the Christian faith, I rejoice with all my heart in the warmth of Christian fellowship that

unites me with those who, like you, love the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, and are willing to bear the reproach to which a frank acceptance of the gospel subjects them in the presence of a hostile world." Yet he did not feel free to accept the offer because of (1) his present commitments at Princeton, (2) his question of his suitability to such an administrative position, and (3) his attachment to a distinctively Presbyterian work. He explained that he saw the current Liberal attack on the Christian faith as "directed against the points wherein the Christian religion — Protestant

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John Blankespoor

“And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures saying as with a loud voice of thunder, Come. And I saw and behold a white horse, and he that sat thereon had a bow, and there was given unto him a crown, and he came forth conquering and to conquer . . . And another horse came forth, a red horse, and to him that sat thereon was given to take peace from the earth . . . And I saw, and behold a black horse . . . and I heard a voice saying, a measure of wheat for a shilling and three measures of barley for a shilling . . . And I saw a pale horse, and he that sat thereon, his name was Death, and Hades followed with him” (Rev. 6:1-8).

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What does all this mean? The rider on the horse can represent only one person, the Lord Jesus Christ. Often we read that he is the conquering One, He is the Lamb that conquers. In Revelation we also read that He has conquered. Putting everything together, we get the picture of the exalted Lord Jesus Christ, ruling the world and always being victorious. He always rules all of history, peoples and nations. He always also rules over the devil and his angels. Satan has much power. But even that is controlled by God through our Lord Jesus Christ, who rides the white horse. When the devil tempts us, the Lord uses him, making the temptations trials, for the refining of our faith even as gold is refined. Throughout all time Christ rides the white horse; He is the only Lord, always victorious, always conquering, never losing. So it will be until the end of time.

There follows the description of three other horses. Of none of these do we read that they go forth conquering and to conquer. Each one, however, does have power, in fact much power. With that power, each is galloping through the world at all times, also in 1987. At the same time Christ, the horseman on the white horse, is mentioned first, and is Lord of them all. The rider on the red horse was given power to take peace from the earth and to make men slay each other. Red is the color of blood. This red horse brings about war. How many wars there have been — hundreds of them, causing an untold amount of bloodshed. One of the seals means that also this horse comes from God's decree. Because of sin, the Lord “brings” or “allows” war to take place.

and Catholic — differs from a radically different type of belief and of life is found today in all the larger ecclesiastical bodies; and in the presence of such a common enemy, those who unfeignedly believe in the gospel of Jesus Christ and are drawn into a new warmth of fellowship and new zeal for common service. Nevertheless, thoroughly consistent Christianity, to my mind, is found only in the Reformed or Calvinistic Faith; and consistent Christianity, I think, is the Christianity easiest to defend. Hence I never call myself a "Fundamentalist." There is, indeed, no inherent objection to the term; and if the disjunction is between "Fundamentalism" and "Modernism," then I am willing to call myself a Fundamentalist of the most pronounced type. But after all, what I prefer to call myself is not a "Fundamentalist" but a "Calvinist" — that is, an adherent of the Reformed Faith. As such I regard myself as standing in the great central current of the Church's life — the current which flows down from the Word of God through Augustine and Calvin, and which has found noteworthy expression in America in the great tradition represented by Charles Hodge and Benjamin Breckenridge Warfield and the other representatives of the "Princeton School." I have the warmest sympathy with other evangelical churches, and a keen sense of agreement with them about those Christian convictions which are today being most insistently assailed; but, for the present and least, I think I can best serve my fellow-Christians — even those who belong to ecclesiastical bodies different from my own — by continuing to be identified, very specifically, with the Presbyterian Church" (pp 426-428).

Later, in speaking at the opening exercises of Westminster Theological Seminary, he spoke of that school's commitment to the Bible, saying (p. 457) "That system of theology, that body of truth, which we find in the Bible, is the Reformed Faith, the Faith commonly called Calvinistic, which is set forth gloriously in the Confession and Catechisms of the Presbyterian Church. It is sometimes referred to as a "man-made creed." But we do not regard it as such. We regard it, in accordance with our ordination pledge as ministers in the Presbyterian Church, as the creed which God has taught us in his Word. If it is contrary to the Bible, it is false. But we hold that it is not contrary to the Bible, but in accordance with the Bible, and true. We rejoice in the approximations to that body of truth which other systems of theology contain; we rejoice in our Christian fellowship with other evangelical churches; we hope that members of other churches, despite our Calvinism, may be willing to enter into Westminster Seminary as students and to listen to what we may have to say. But we cannot consent to impoverish our message by setting forth less than what we find the Scriptures to contain; and we believe that we shall best serve our fellow-Christians, from whatever church they may come, if we set forth not some vague greatest common

measure among various creeds, but that great historic Faith that has come through Augustin and Calvin to our own Presbyterian Church. Glorious is the heritage of the Reformed Faith. God grant that it may go forth to new triumphs even in the present time of unbelief!"

(Perhaps it should be explained that what was called "Presbyterian" in the English setting differed in no substantial way from the same movement that was called "Reformed" in the countries of Europe. When our churches took over part of the old Southern Presbyterian mission field in China, the name was not even changed. Today there is no real reason for perpetuating the historical and accidental difference of name between those who really share the same Biblical Reformed faith.) PDJ

Who Am I?

Glenn P. Palmer

I am described as "righteous" and "devout," because, as Luke writes, the Holy Spirit is upon me, revealed himself to me and moved me.

When I saw Jesus, I praised God and said,

For my eyes have seen your salvation,
Which you have prepared in the sight of all
people,
A light for revelation to the Gentiles
and for glory to your people Israel.

I then blessed the child's father and mother.
Who am I?

My name means "crowned," and there are many things that could earn a crown for me, considered from man's perspective. Were not the people of my household the first converts in Achaiah? Were they not baptized by Paul himself? But these distinctions do not earn the crown of life.

My household and I have devoted ourselves to the service of the saints, so much so that we provided for Paul what the Corinthian church failed to give. We refreshed his spirit. Paul says, "Such men deserve recognition." Who am I? Or have you forgotten my name?

Luke 2: 25-35
I Cor. 1:16, 16:15-18

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The Ecumenical Ship and its Destination

by Peter De Jong

In the April, 1986 issue of the Dutch periodical, *Getrouw*, Editor J.C. Maris notes that the World Council of Churches has from its beginning been compared with a ship going to sea in a heavy storm. Its secretary, Emilio Castro, last year pointed out the danger that its passengers, in their preoccupation with the voyage, might forget that their destination was unity. In the measure that their circle became larger, so that eventually all religions — in fact, all mankind came to be included, the destination became steadily more vague. Accordingly, Castro could ask whether in this common search for righteousness, peace and the integrity of creation, we are not already more united than we realized, in a unity deeper than our doctrinal formulations can express.

It thus becomes obvious that the ecumenical course is diverging ever further away from the unity in Christ which, according to God's Word, does not include everyone, but is restricted to true believers who in John 17 are clearly distinguished from the world. The result is that serious Christians lose interest in this voyage, whose course they do not at all approve. But if your church is on this voyage, are you not in it whether you like it or not? And we can't simply say, "We'll see where the ship lands."

Furthermore, this ecumenical ship is on a course shared by many other craft; it has no course of its own. Although it flies a Christian flag, it is not guided by the compass of God's Word. Its course is determined by human reckoning and expectations of a better world that promises freedom and well-being to all. Thus Marxist ideals gain control also in the churches, as the ecumenical churches chart a course toward an earthly paradise incorrectly named "the Kingdom of God". The writer recalled the account of Paul's voyage in Acts 27, which despite its promising beginning in disregard of the Apostle's warning, ended in shipwreck. The ecumenical ship sails in the wake of the world in expectation of the unity of all mankind under one world government. A unification of all religions is supposed to cement this unity of mankind and to eliminate all wars and conflicts. The inhabitants of the world will be registered as world citizens; that registration will be required if one is to engage in commerce or industry. Preparations for such an arrangement are far advanced and it could come soon. It is evident that this unity can tolerate no exceptions. Anyone

who may have conscientious objections will have to be excluded.

The Holy Scripture nowhere teaches that the church of Christ will develop into such an influential, visible world-church. It rather predicts an opposite process of apostasy. False prophets will deceive many and lawlessness will increase (Mt. 24:11,12). Hated by all nations, the true church will become a prey to oppression and persecution. The only place left for it will be in the "Wilderness" (Rev. 12:13-17). This is not the image of a prosperous church that shares the favor of the world and its leaders.

The Bible does indeed predict the rise of a united world-church in the service of a false religion. It will be led by the false prophet, the "beast that arises out of the earth" and that will make the inhabitants of the earth worship the antichrist (Rev. 13:11-18), whose coming is "in accordance with the work of Satan," but "whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of his mouth" (2 Thess. 2:8). It is to be feared that the coming world-church, proclaimed by the Ecumenical Movement, will produce this religion of the end-time.

The editor highlights the effort of the International Council of Christian Churches to alert all Bible-believing churches and Christians to action and prayer in order to remain faithful to the end and "to contend for the faith that God has once for all entrusted to the saints" (Jude 3). The unbiblical Ecumenicals' course must be unconditionally rejected, for God's Word permits no fellowship between righteousness and unrighteousness, light and darkness, Christ and Belial, faith and unbelief, God's temple and that of idols. It orders not false unity, but separation, perhaps painful, but accompanied by God's promise, "I will receive you. I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters" (2 Cor. 6: 14-18). The article invites Bible-believing churches, not to support a world-church in the spirit of the times, but to submit to the authority of God's Word, to watch and pray in a common struggle against apostasy and unbelief, to testify to salvation through Christ's blood, to remember suffering fellow-believers (1 Pet. 5:9), and to "wait for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13).

(Translated from the Dutch) P.D.J.

From Amoral to Wicked

Jody Philbeck Gravely

Journey received this interesting letter during the month. Because it reveals the all too typical wickedness of our day, we decided to publish it.

It has been brought to my attention in recent weeks that many doctors are being quite unethical in their treatment of people who do not wish to deny life to their unborn handicapped infants.

One such incident involves a couple I know who found out during the wife's seventh month of pregnancy that their baby has hydrocephalous. Her local obstetrician quickly suggested that he terminate the child's life. He could induce labor and strangle the child with its umbilical cord.

When the couple replied that they chose to have the child and care for it, the doctor was appalled. Many times he questioned their decision. He insisted on terminating the child's life and suggested that they try to conceive again and have a normal child. He seemed determined to change their minds.

The couple has since been sent to a hospital with doctors more equipped to handle their situation. They assumed that they would finally find out how to care for their handicapped infant. They wanted to know what could be done to correct some of his problems after birth. Instead, after visiting four different physicians, they have received little information about the neonatal unit and its equipment.

During visit after visit they have met a barrage of doctors pressuring them to end the infant's life. "The best way," they were told, "would be to puncture the infant during an amniocentesis, let it bleed to death, and then induce labor."

In a second incident, a hospital department head in a nearby large town became pregnant at age forty. She was urged to have amniocentesis; it would be wise to know if her child would be born with a handicap. In that way, she could prepare for it emotionally and have treatment readily available.

When she went to have the test, she was asked to sign a form stating that she would abort her child if it did have a severe handicap. Refusing to sign the form, she was denied the amniocentesis and severely reprimanded by several obstetricians. The pressure did not stop. She was treated as if she were mentally unstable for desiring to raise a possible handicapped child.

In recent weeks as I have thought about these incidents, something in addition to the issue of

denying life to the unborn has disturbed me. If a woman wanted to abort her baby and was continually being counselled to give birth to it, many pro-choice people would shout "Harassment!" But in just the opposite situation, **no one seems to think she is being harassed.** Yet the woman who needs to hear about available treatments for her child is constantly being reminded of ways available to kill that baby she wishes to raise.

I hope that knowing of these incidents will alert *Journey's* readers to the fact that abortion is not just suction of embryos and first trimester fetuses. It is legal up to the day a baby is born and is being advocated strongly and persistently to people who want no part of it.

By Jody Philbeck Gravely is a freelance writer from Martinsville, Virginia.

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Walking and Working Together

Randal S. Lankheet

For thirty-five years the Reformed Fellowship has sought to promote a solidly Reformed witness both inside and outside the Christian Reformed Church. It has used two means in its efforts to reach this goal: publications and meetings. In addition to *The Outlook* (first called *Torch and Trumpet*) it has published books, pamphlets, Bible study guides, and more. And, mainly through its various regional chapters, meetings have been held which featured lecture series and public addresses. Through the spoken word and the printed word, then, the Word of God as understood by our Reformed confessions has been widely proclaimed by the Reformed Fellowship.

Thankfully, the Reformed Fellowship is not the only group seeking to promote a confessionally-orthodox, Biblical vision. It has been joined by other groups, the largest being the Committee of Concerned Members.

From all appearances, the Reformed Fellowship and the Committee of Concerned Members agree on the major issues facing the Christian Reformed Church today. Both groups tirelessly uphold the Reformed confessions. And they share several men who serve on the two boards of the two groups.

With all this commonality, some people think that their membership in the Reformed Fellowship automatically makes them members of the Committee of Concerned Members. And some think

that when they pay their annual dues to the Committee of Concerned Members, they should be receiving *The Outlook*, published by Reformed Fellowship. Not so! Though they have almost everything in common, the two groups are still separate organizations. They each have their own dues, their own mailing lists, their own boards, and their own annual meetings.

While we can rejoice in all this interest, both old and new, personally I regret the duplication of effort. Evidently, the boards of the two organizations also share some of this regret since they recently held a combined meeting to consider how the two groups can better coordinate their efforts. And some small steps were taken towards working together for a common purpose.

Where all this will eventually lead, no one knows. What we do know, however, is that God has been blessing the Christian Reformed Church in raising up more members who are seeking genuine renewal through the Word and the Spirit. As these members join the Reformed Fellowship and the Committee of Concerned Members and as these two groups work more closely together, we should have good hope that our denomination may be preserved from increasing theological liberalism.

Rev. Randal S. Lankheet is the pastor of the Jamestown, Michigan Christian Reformed Church and one of our board members.

Needed: Christian Activists

by Laurie Vanden Heuvel

INTRODUCTION

Fourteen years have passed since January 22, 1973 when the United States Supreme Court struck down all the anti-abortion laws in all the states, making abortion legal in this country. Immediately following this shocking event, pro-life groups sprang up all over the country to fight abortion and work for a Human Life Amendment to the United States Constitution which would guarantee the "right to life" for all human life from conception to the moment of natural death.

The focus of the debate at that time centered on the humanity of the fetus at every stage of

development. For a number of years, many in the medical community loudly maintained that the tiny blob was nothing more than tissue. But modern technology has annihilated that argument. Ultra sound reveals with awesome clarity, the heart chambers and limbs of the tiniest human beings.

CHANGE OF FOCUS

As a result, the focus of the pro-life discussion has changed. The question in the 70's was: Is this blob a human life? Technology has answered with a resounding "Yes!" So the question now becomes: What value must we place on this tiny life? Does it really have the same rights as a person already born? You notice that the question has changed from a scientific question to an ethical question. It is very important to understand this because when the discussion moves to ethics it is then in the area of values; and in order to determine values, it is essential to have a standard by which to assign values. For the evolutionist, the non-Christian, there is no higher standard than the human animal. Human life by such a standard is cheap and expendable. But, for the Christian, the Bible is the standard and according to it, all human life bears the image of God and as such is sacred and must be preserved. Because the Christians have the truth, many have emerged to take roles of leadership in the formation of pro-life groups, in the establishment of pregnancy centers, and in politics. They have taken a lot of abuse, but most have remained vigorous and determined.

SLIPPERY SLOPE

In 1973 the phrase "slippery slope" was introduced. Concerned pro-lifers voiced their concern that liberalized abortion laws would lead to infanticide and euthanasia. Scoffers called this the "slippery slope" mentality. But have we, in fact, slid down this "slippery slope?" Yes, we have.

Not only have 18,000,000 unborn babies met their deaths since 1973 (16,000,000 more than the combined death toll of all the wars in which the United States has been involved), but within the last year, legislation and court decision have sanctioned the practices of infanticide and euthanasia.

Last year, thirty-five states adopted Living Will legislation which creates a new standard of medical care by which doctors may starve or dehydrate their patients to death at the wishes of the patient, family members or their own discretion. Living Will legislation conditions people to think that everyone has a "right to die" when, where and however he/she pleases.

In June of this year (1986), the United States Supreme Court struck down "Baby Doe" rules which guarantee life-saving treatment for babies born with a handicap. The Supreme Court declared itself powerless (!!) to act on the handicapped child's behalf if the parents decided against life-saving treatment for their handicapped child.

NEW MENTALITY

A new mentality has emerged which replaces the "sanctity of human life" ethic with the "quality of human life" ethic. Human life is no longer sacred simply because it is human, created after God's image. As one speaker at a recent "Conference on Christian Faith, Health and Medical Practice" stated: "One must have a 'minimum threshold of existence' to qualify as an image bearer of God." Who sets that "minimum threshold" and what criteria are used to determine that "minimum threshold" is up for grabs. If an unborn child is unwanted, he/she can be aborted. If a child will be handicapped or retarded, it may be aided in dying by deliberate withholding or withdrawal of food and water. Similarly, if an elderly person is no longer physically or mentally functional, he should be "helped" to "die with dignity" by deliberate starvation or dehydration. In the country of Holland, one out of every six elderly persons dies from self-administered lethal injection. The "quality of life" ethic is rapidly replacing the "sanctity of life" ethic which the Bible clearly teaches. The frightening thing is that some Christians are accepting and promoting it, and clothing it in pious language.

Along with the new "quality of life" ethic has come a parallel mentality which accepts the right of one individual or a group of individuals to decide whether another individual (unborn, handicapped or elderly) may live or must die.

SOLUTION

The snowball which was launched on January 22, 1973 has gathered weight and momentum and will crush us with a vengeance if it is not stopped. Christians must become involved. They are the only citizens that have the *standard of truth*, the Word of God, which is needed to bring about the necessary changes. Most unbelievers no longer care because the issue has become an ethical one and they are not equipped to handle it.

What can we do?

Prayer is number one. The Lord says in II Chronicles 7:14, "If my people who are called by my name shall humble themselves and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sins, and will heal their land."

Purity must be stressed in our society. A large percentage of abortions are performed on unmarried teens. Free sex is the primary pastime of thousands of teenagers. Chastity and all that it means for their spiritual, physical, mental and emotional welfare needs to be proclaimed openly and repeatedly from pulpits in our land. Chastity programs must be initiated in the private and public high schools. Planned Parenthood, the nation's largest abortion-provider, is currently launching an all-out offensive to establish "health clinics" in high schools everywhere. These clinics will dispense contraceptives and refer for abortion without parental knowledge or consent.

Preparedness is an important ingredient of the solution to our pressing problems. I urge all Christians to become informed. Too many people think they know all that is necessary to know. They are opposed to abortion, infanticide and euthanasia and they think that is enough. But it is not. The "pro-choice," "quality of life," "die with dignity" mentality is growing at a phenomenal pace and we need to be informed. Subscribe to monthly updates such as *Action Line* (Christian Action Council publication), or the *National Right to Life News* or any one of the many pro-life publications. These publications will provide abundant *motivation* and *methods* for becoming involved in the pro-life cause which needs you so desperately. Join a local group and share your time, money and effort for this cause.

Political involvement is crucial in winning the battle for life. The bottom line is the elected legislators who will make decisions for us on the legality of certain practices and the appropriation of funds for these practices. Know your candidates for judgeships and state and federal offices. Vote for pro-life candidates. Pro-life voters are often criticised for being single issue voters. But, is there any issue more basic than life itself?

Become aware of bills that are coming up for vote on state and federal levels. Write and/or call your senators and representatives and let them know your convictions regarding an upcoming issue. Abortion, infanticide and euthanasia-related legislation comes up often and your voice needs to be heard. Your local pro-life chapter and pro-life newspapers can furnish you with legislative alerts and names and numbers to call. The Bible encourages us to become politically involved. Psalm 119:46 and 47 says, "I will speak your statutes before kings and will not be put to shame, for I delight in your commandments because I love them."

It is our duty as Christians to see to it that our government upholds God's will. It is our duty as Christians to see to it that the lives of our nation's most abused minorities - the unborn, the handicapped, the elderly - are protected by law.

Isaiah 46:3 and 4 put everything in proper perspective. It is not up to man to decide whether the unwanted or flawed unborn, the handicapped or the minimally functioning elderly should live or die. God alone may set the perimeter of our pilgrimage - and this He does with tender love:

"Listen to me, O house of Jacob
All you who remain of the house of Israel
You whom I have upheld since you were conceived
And have carried since your birth.
Even to your old age and gray hairs,
I am he, I am he who will sustain you.
I have made you and I will carry you.
I will sustain you and I will rescue you."

Mrs. Laurie Vanden Heuvel is the past president of the Siouxland Christian Action Council, Orange City, Iowa. She currently serves as the president of the Michigan Right to Life Education Committee, Grand Rapids, Michigan

Approaching Ecumenical Suicide?

by Peter De Jong

Courtship with the RCA

Some current developments demand that our churches give special attention to their growing ecumenical relations with other churches. Most of us are aware of a recent movement toward closer relations with the denomination from which our churches separated 130 years ago, the Reformed Church in America. A joint committee of the two denominations has for some time been discussing the relations between them. Our last synod was overtured by one consistory to bring the issues of covenant theology with reference especially to Christian education in Christian schools and of membership in such ecumenical movements as the World Council, National Council and related programs into these discussions. Our synod not only rejected that overture (relaying its substance as mere information), but also withdrew its 1985 mandate to the committee to engage the other body "in discussion of the specific theological and Christian practice issues which pose a barrier to us," on the flimsy ground that such matters are already under discussion (pp.613,614)!

As these now *less clearly defined* moves toward closer relations proceed from our side, it is perhaps more illuminating to take notice of the way in which they are proceeding from the side of the RCA. Professor Robert Decker (in *The Standard Bearer*) called attention to the RCA Church Herald's report that its General Synod took "specific steps toward the CRC, steps which the Rev. David Cooper" (who chaired that synod's advisory committee on Christian Unity) "described as progress toward possible merger." That General Synod also referred more frankly than the last CRC synod wanted to do to 7 issues that might need to be resolved including such matters as Christian schools, lodge membership, ecumenical relations, women ministers, elders and deacons, and intercommunion.

While the RCA plainly envisions movement toward such a merger, its attention appears to be directed much less toward this little matter of reunion with our churches than toward the much bigger efforts to remove barriers to a merger with the developing union of Liberal Lutheran churches, as well as with the United Presbyterian Church (USA), a movement that is reported to be pursued with equal vigor from the side of the Lutherans.

Local Promotion

While these union discussions are going on between church leaders, our area churches are also being vigorously encouraged to move in the same direction in their communities. At recent classes meetings they were confronted with "A Partnership Proposal to Area CRC/RCA Churches" from the joint committee of the area "to pair local RCA and CRC congregations together for the purpose of developing mutual understanding between our congregations and denominations, sharing talents and resources, and exploring areas of common concern." A consideration advanced for the proposal was that "This . . . program will serve as a prelude to the joint meetings of our general synods in 1989." Suggested as practical ways to implement the program were "periodic exchanges of pastors, special music, chairs, etc.," "joint worship services," "joint lecture series," joint vacation Bible schools, joint distribution of literature, joint mercy projects, partnerships in prayer, joint young peoples' and senior citizens' activities, "joint divorce-recovery groups," and Bible study series. According to early reports, the churches, with few exceptions, are accepting the program.

The Ecumenical Charter

As this obviously uncritical and often unquestioning promotion of a church union is going on at local and denominational levels, our coming June synod will also be asked to adopt an "ecumenical charter" as a new guide to our relations with other churches. The charter, which was put before the churches at the 1985 synod, was the subject of the June 1986 Reformed Ecumenical Synod *Theological Forum*. That *Forum* contained an introduction by Dr. John H. Kromminga, one of the originators of the charter. He recalled that our relations with other denominations had been outlined in an 1898 decision on correspondence with other churches and on working toward some kind of international Reformed assembly. That was followed in 1944 by a more extensive report and decision envisioning contact with all kinds of churches, but seeing that as a duty to be a "teacher . . . to make them conform more closely to the demands of the Word of God" (p.6). We remember that the degree and manner of that contact was to be distinguished as these other churches were considered nearer or farther away from that standard.

A Misleading Introduction

Turning now to the report on the Charter (in the 1985 synod Agenda and Acts, pp.237ff.), we find it introduced by the explanation that it is needed because of changes since "forty years ago, when ecumenical relations in the Christian church in general and in the Christian Reformed Church in particular were hardly recognizable in terms of what exists today." Yet we are to see the charter as "not so much a revision as a restatement of the position of the church" and are assured that it "is based upon broad biblical perspectives and reflects the teachings of such passages as John 17; 1 Corinthians 15; and Ephesians 4; plus a host of others." (What is more significant, however, is that in the document there is no further allusion to these Scripture passages or effort to show that they do determine the policy being proposed.) Similarly, we are assured that "the charter reflects the teachings of the ancient creeds and the Reformed confessions (e.g., the Apostles' Creed, Art. 9; Nicene Creed, paragraph 5; Belgic Confession, Articles XXVII to XXIX; Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 21) in their vision of one holy catholic and apostolic church," but there is also no further allusion to the specific teachings of these creeds. Instead, although we are told that the committee intended to be consistent with the "formative positions adopted by the CRC," in this document it was "MAKING SUCH ADJUSTMENTS IN EMPHASIS AS ARE SUGGESTED BY THE EXPERIENCE OF THE CHURCH" (emphasis, mine). In other words, what is seen as necessitating and distinguishing this charter is nothing Biblical or confessional, but our experience in the changing church situation!

It strikes the reader as strange that these preliminary items which "it is necessary to bear . . . in mind," in order to evaluate and interpret it correctly" are NOT PART OF THE CHARTER which the church is asked to approve! These necessary preliminary remarks containing the brief allusions to three Bible passages and references to the creeds concerning the church, are not themselves part of the proposed statement about our ecumenical policy, but are designed to get a favorable hearing for it. Their role appears rather like that of a booster rocket intended to help launch the vehicle and to be dropped off as soon as it is under way.!

An Unbiblical Ideal

Proceeding now to the Charter proper, (which is said to be, but is not shown to be "in obedience to Scripture and in agreement with the Reformed confessions"), we see that it begins by affirming the unity of the church as "a new humanity" in Christ. "Both the local and the worldwide church are to be one body because in Christ they are one body." This unity is then said to "allow for diversity in worship, theology and church order." Since this unity must be "a unity in truth," "in effort to overcome these differences we must not

only share with others our perceptions but also be open to theirs". We are told that "Through ecumenical dialogue we must trust God to teach us all, and thereby unite us through a deeper common grasp of his truth". Although "the ideal form of this unity is not yet known," it "is one of mutual renewal and acceptance through mutual giving and receiving."

Totally lacking in this description of the one united church, "the new humanity," is the Lord's and His apostles' constant differentiation of His church as people chosen "out of the world," distinguished from the world for whom Christ does not pray, hated by the world, "because they are not of the world," and "sanctified" (separated) through God's truth—John 17, the very passage that is listed in the preliminary remarks, but then pointedly ignored. Totally lacking is the Bible's incessant warning against the "false Christs and false prophets" who will "deceive many" (Matt. 24:11,24), and against the false teachers who would arise from outside and from within the churches to mislead them (Acts 20:29 and 30). The Bible nowhere tells us, as the charter in its definitive statement does, that we must join and seek unity with everything that alleges that it is Christian. It warns us not to believe "every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1). The Bible sternly warns us, "Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness" (2 Cor. 6:14). What has completely dropped out of this proposed new ecumenical vision of the church which we are asked to adopt as our guide, is our Lord's and His Apostles' constant warnings against false teachings. . . the Bible's emphasis on the sharp opposition between true and false, right and wrong, God and the devil. That antithesis is faithfully reflected in the creeds, notably in the Belgic Confession's (Art. XXIX) sharp delineation of difference between the true and false church. To assert, as the Charter begins by saying, "In obedience to the Scriptures and in agreement with Reformed confessions," is to begin with a lie!

In the later, practical part of the document, there are, it must be observed, some qualifying provisions. . . "perception of the truth is not a matter of indifference" . . . "we may not compromise the Biblical message, but through dialogue must seek to come to a deeper understanding of God's revelation"—"we reject those perceptions that so distort biblical truth that our witness to Jesus Christ is hindered in a broken world." (W. Van't Spijker in the *Theological Forum* (P.25) calls attention to the serious confusion at this point in the Charter. The churches' duty to confess gospel truth may not be reduced to our opinion of whether it helps or hinders evangelistic witness.) But these weak qualifications do not cancel the fundamentally flawed,

compromising and misleading character of the document as a whole.

Comments from the RES

The 8 responses to the Charter in the RES *Theological Forum*, although speaking diplomatically as one would expect in such an academic "forum," point to these inconsistencies in the document. The representatives of the Reformed churches who, in spite of the warnings of the RES against joining the World Council of Churches, are members of it, generally express their gratification as they see The Christian Reformed Church here supporting their own more Liberal policy. But even some of them raise critical questions about this document. Even the Dutch (GKN) representative notes "the degree of uncertainty . . . about predicting the shape which eventual unity is to take. . . . more could have been said about being "called to testify" . . . "the question of truth is, of course, at stake" . . . "dialogue has limitations" . . . "It is our conviction that the Reformed confession is closest to the testimony of Scripture, and ought therefore to be protected, propagated, and elaborated further." The Indonesian asks, "How far does the Charter permit the CRC to depart from its traditional stance as a confessional church" (p.23)? Others, representing the more conservative churches are more critical. Peter Buys of South Africa remarks "that we will have to allow too many of the non-negotiable values of Jerusalem to go to rack and ruin before we will feel at home in the company of the WCC." And he asks, "Isn't the CRC indebted to the (other Reformed) churches to submit the charter to them before finally adopting and implementing it? . . . it may happen that the CRC wins a far-off nephew and loses a close brother." "Dialogue without witness about the distinctiveness of the Reformed faith is senseless," observes the Australian. The Orthodox Presbyterian misses in the document "a strong emphasis on the Scriptures as the standard by which we and others must be judged, and warns against relativizing the truth. The representative of the Dutch CRC insists that "the proclamation of the Word as exposition and application of Holy Scripture, is central," and simply states that he "would not (like the Charter) say without qualification that the ideal form of unity is not yet known."

Committee or Church Charter?

The Australian representative, Henk de Waard, points out that although "the Charter repeatedly states that the ecumenical task belongs to the whole people of God . . . all members, congregations, consistories, classes and the synod of the CRC . . . the Charter does not say anything about ecumenical activity at the grass-roots level. All attention is given to the work of an Interchurch Relations Committee" (p.14). This shrewd and accurate observation highlights one of the worst and most mischievous characteristics of the document. In our system of appointing standing committees

by which they nominate their own successors, this committee, like some others, has tended to become a closed little group or "club" that over the years takes on an independent character and course of its own that has less and less to do with the churches which it is supposed to represent and serve. This document is so obviously of, by and for a committee that even an outside observer cannot help but notice it! In it the committee simply tells the church what it wants the church to say and what it wants the church to tell it to do. As this little group of people increasingly moves in ecumenical circles, it reflects more and more of the character and trends of that environment to the point where in this charter the Bible and creeds have all but fallen out of sight, to be replaced by the apostate dream of one all-inclusive church body whose "ideal form . . . is not yet known"! This becomes so obvious that an observer innocently asks, "How far does the charter permit the CRC to depart from its traditional stance as a confessional church?"

Seeking Christian Union?

This document will be recommended for approval to our coming synod. In the light of the tendency of recent synods to approve whatever committees recommend and to ignore objections, it seems likely that the June synod will approve it, perhaps with little or no attention to what it says. That will commit us to a radical change of policy. Instead of objecting to the "unequal yoke with unbelievers," which has historically characterized our churches, we will have declared that it is our duty to join them as long as they want in some sense to keep the name Christian, regardless of doctrinal definition of what that is supposed to mean. Some of our ecumenical adventurers have been trying to persuade us that the World Council shows signs of becoming more orthodox, despite the fact that the Vancouver meeting saw it welcoming a variety of pagan religious leaders and even avowed atheists. Their political and social pronouncements increasingly appear to echo those of the World Council. Four decades ago we saw Liberal religious leaders encouraging the Communist takeover of China. Today we see similar leaders serving exactly the same cause in other areas of the world. (How many trips has our committee taken to South Africa, the troubled land which seems currently to be a favorite target for a Liberal-encouraged Communist take-over?) The adoption of the charter will mean that most of our churches, who rarely notice what committees and synods are doing, before they know what has happened, will find themselves a part of one of the most anti-Christian church movements that the devil has ever inspired to destroy the gospel and church of Christ. Does that sound too strong? Consider how the leaders of mainline churches which the charter will commit us to joining as "Christian brothers", today promote, defend and pay for the murder of millions of unborn children. Consider too how the

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World Council of Churches has for years been channelling vast amounts of church-contributed money to Marxist guerrillas who are murdering Christians and destroying their churches. Can anything be more plainly satanic than this?

The criticisms of the Charter should not discourage responsible ecumenical relations with fellow Christians. Many, perhaps most of us, know of RCA churches and members with whom we have a close kinship and with whom we would gladly be one denomination. But those churches and members have long been making futile protests against their denominational

enslavement to the World Council. If we now welcome that unholy alliance we will be betraying them and all others who want to remain Bible-believing Reformed Christians and churches. If our churches permit themselves to be misled into adopting this Ecumenical Charter, they may, instead of advancing real church union swell the number of members and churches whom loyalty to our Lord and His Word is driving to seek fellowship elsewhere in churches that still believe the Bible and seek to believe, confess and live its doctrine.

PDJ

Rev. Nelson D. Kloosterman, professor at Mid-America Reformed Seminary at Orange City, Iowa, is to speak at a public meeting Thursday, January 29, at 7:30 P.M., at the Dutton Christian Reformed Church on the subject, "The Danger of Being Concerned." Everyone Welcome.



imposed *their* sense upon the text." This is hardly a responsible bit of advice. I am one of Prof. Murray's former students and esteem him highly as a biblical interpreter. But questions of translation simply cannot be solved by looking at one commentary. The things the Rev. Murray objects to — he does not even inform us which they are — can be found in other commentaries of equal orthodoxy.

Each Bible translation involves a degree of interpretation by the translator. Let the reader take the KJV rendering of Ps. 68:19: "... who daily loadeth us with benefits," and note the heavy use of italics, showing that the KJV was not sure what the Hebrew meant but was trying to put its "sense" upon a difficult passage. Other translations, with equal reason, render the passage differently. The point is: translation involves making sense out of the Hebrew and the Greek, and one cannot always be one hundred percent sure.

As to the question which version is more literal and which more "dynamic," why did the KJV render Luke 24:29 by using the two different words "abide" and "tarried" while actually the Greek uses the same word twice? It probably did so because it thought this would make more elegant English. A good concern, which the NIV applies just a bit more consistently than

the KJV did in its day. But in Luke 24 the NIV uses a form of "to stay" both times and is more literal than either the KJV or the New King James. And why did the KJV add the words "and looking in" in John 20:5 while they were not in the Greek? There is no need to add them, and the NIV does not do so. It is more literal than the KJV here. The same comparison can be made with some of the other supposedly literal versions. More than once the NIV sticks closer to the text than they do.

The New King James Version which the Rev. Murray seems to favor is not the KJV in modern garb. Here and there it shows differing translation approaches as I have shown in my review in the CRC weekly *The Banner*. Moreover, it does away completely with the "Thou" and the "Thee" forms in its address to God, something true KJV devotees will not like at all.

Each Bible translation, being the work of sinful men and women, has its faults. The NIV is not perfect either. But the things alleged against it in this article are completely unfounded. And I hope and pray that many more people will begin using the NIV at home, in study groups and in worship services. This is fully deserved.

Sincerely yours,
M.H. Wondstra

Dear Editor:

In my opinion you did your readers a poor service in reprinting the Rev. Iain Murray's article on "translations of the Bible" (Oct. '86). As one of those involved in the NIV translation process I shall chiefly speak about that which he says about it. In a communication to Mr. Murray I have already voiced my objections and have achieved some excellent understanding with him.

The article suggests that by taking just one commentary on Romans, that by Prof. John Murray, the readers will see that the NIV translations have "actually