



# THE OUTLOOK

DEVOTED TO THE EXPOSITION AND DEFENSE OF THE REFORMED FAITH

MARCH 1987

**Street Apologetics**

**The Boesky Case**

**Concern:  
Fault or Duty?**

# Presuppositionalism for the Milkman

BY Steve M. Schlissel

"Good morning, Mr. Jones."

"Good morning, Reverend Schnitzel."

"That's Sch-L-i-SS-el, Mr. Jones."

"Er, uh, sorry. It is a nice day, isn't it?"

"Yup. God sure gave us a beaut today."

"Maybe we ought to keep to the weather. I know you're a religious man, but I'm pretty much convinced that we're on our own here. I think religion is basically a cop-out."

"Opiate of the people, and all that, huh?"

"Yeah. I mean, I've got nothin' against people believin' in God if it makes them feel better, or whatever. But I'm more realistic."

"Oh?"

"That's right. When I was a kid I used to go to church and catechism class but now I see that life is what you make it. Experience has taught me a thing or two, and I guess if I had to have a 'religious' motto it would be 'God helps those who help themselves.'"

"Mr. Jones, do you have a few minutes to sit down and chat. These are very important matters that we're talking about and I feel that they deserve more than a front-door mention. Your eternal well-being is at stake here."

"My, we are getting serious, aren't we? All right. I'm about through with my run. Just have two more deliveries to make over in Bay Ridge. Why not? I suppose the milkman just might teach the preacher somethin'!"

"Fine, fine. Let's sit down over here in the living room. Good. Now I want to share with you something that Jesus said. 'I am the way, the truth and the life. No man comes unto the Father except by me.'"

"Well, that may be fine for you. That's OK. I've got a lot of Christian friends, and I don't mind them really. A couple of 'em have even asked me to consider Jesus, and to tell you the truth, I've got no quarrel with most of His teachings. After all, who's against peace and love and everything?"

"Mr. Jones, some Christians might talk to you in a way that would encourage you to take a walk down that 'way' Jesus spoke about; some might encourage you to vacation there, so to speak, while you maintain your permanent residence somewhere else. I want to make it quite clear that what I'm going to ask you to do is not simply consider Jesus, or entertain Jesus, or use Jesus on desperate occasions. No. What I'm going to try to present to you is the message of the Bible which teaches us that we have to move lock, stock and barrel from where we've become accustomed to living, straight into the Kingdom of the Father, and that the only way there is via the Son. God commands you to repent and believe."

"Whoa! That's quite a mouthful for openers! But I think I can handle it. Not many people know this, Reverend, uh, Sch,li,ss,el, Reverend Schlissel, but I'm a MIT dropout. Before becoming a milkman I wanted to be a nuclear engineer. However, after reading three or four books by Ralph Nader, I decided delivering milk was more productive for my society. You see, even if there is a God, He knows I'm a pretty good guy, so I'm not worried."

"Mr. Jones, what's your first name?"

"Bartholomew, but you can call me 'Bart.'"

"Fine. And you can call me Reverend Schlissel. HA! Just kidding. You can call me 'Steve.' You know, Bart, what you just said was a 'mouthful' (as you called it) at least equal to mine. Even in our first statements we've revealed that we look at life, and interpret it in RADICALLY different ways. Now one thing's clear and for sure, don't you think? We can't BOTH be right. You talk about a God who may or may not exist, about the ability to be logical and rational without such a God as may or may not exist, and at the same time you seem to be concerned about justifying yourself before this God who may or may not call you into judgment. What I say, on the other hand, is that the God of the Bible is the God who created and sustains the heavens and the earth. Without Him, nothing else could conceivably exist, nothing could continue to exist. The fact that you and I are here, first presupposes that He created us. Secondly, unless the God of the Scripture exists, there is no such thing as "logic" or rationality or anything else. Statements, arguments, ethics, life — none of these have any meaning. Furthermore, your comment about your being a pretty good guy" demonstrates that you know full well, deep inside you, that the God I declare to you is your God, that He made you in His image, that you are not on good terms with Him, and that you seek, need, but do not find (on your terms) justification. I hope you will discover that Jesus Christ is the only solution to these problems."

"Oh, I don't agree at all. . . ."

"I didn't think you would (yet, that is, I pray)."

"No. That will not do. The evidence is on my side."

"What 'evidence'?"

"Why, science, evolution, history. Things continue as they have since the beginning, developing under the guidance of Nature. Man is obviously, to any unbiased view, the key player in this arena. God has, is and will remain at best a dispensable question mark."

"Letting your suggestive remark about 'the beginning' pass for now, I'd like to focus on that comment about 'any UNBIASED view.' Your statements and your current position are proof enough that there is no such thing as an 'unbiased view.' According to the Bible you have a very strong interest in denying the truths about God which you know because of your having been created in His image. When you look at the world, you seek not to understand it as God created it, but you first, before anything else, deny His ownership, though He's left His name on everything everywhere. Again, it is quite obvious we cannot both be right; and I urge you to consider further the things I am saying, hoping that God, the Holy Spirit, will show you their veracity and bring you to repentance. For it is very sinful to deny God and the knowledge of God. Bart, on your principles, how can you know anything?"

# 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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"By tests and verification of tests by the community."

"Leaving for the moment the loss that definition leaves for you in the area of, say, historical data, which is not subject to repeated experimentation, let me ask you upon what principle the validity of tests rests?"

"Why, that's very simple; upon the continuity or regularity of events and things as observed by man since the beginning."

"There goes that 'beginning' again! Be that as it may, how do you account for this 'regularity'?"

"Well, things ARE just that way. That's the way it is."

"But, of course, if things rest on no firmer foundation than that, tomorrow, conceivably, things may be entirely different. Furthermore, don't you maintain, as an evolutionist, that these entries of entirely different orders have happened and will happen again? What happens to scientific knowledge on that flimsy basis? No. It seems that you first account for creation on the basis of pure chance, and then build your science on pure pattern. Now don't you see that such irrational thinking must be motivated by something? Bart, your explanation of life explains nothing! In fact, it makes explanations of anything impossible. I think, if we had time, that I could demonstrate to you that you do the same thing with morals. If the Triune God of Scripture is not the ultimate determiner of what is right and what is wrong, morality is rooted in nothing, grows out of chance, and serves no purpose. A murderer is morally equal to a healer. Theft as theft would not be possible because, unless God is the original and rightful owner of all, no one could be the rightful owner of anything.

"Of course, you'd find it difficult in a world like that. Someone might take your milk route simply because he was bigger or stronger. On your principles, that would simply be the introduction of a 'new order.' You have no unchangeable standard, nothing that stands above you, settled in the heavens (as the Scripture describes God's Law) of which that would be a violation. Yet, in your heart you'd be outraged! You'd insist that what that bully did was unfair, not right."

"You bet I would!"

"But why? On what basis?"

"On the basis of, I've been doing this route for eleven years. I've got a contract with the dairy."

"What good is a contract in a world of ultimate flux, a world in which "Science" so-called has "demonstrated" that the law of the jungle, "might makes right," is the one that "nature" has established to ensure the survival of those most fit to rule, and to father the future generations?"

"Hey, hold on a minute. That sounds more like the Nazis than the gold ol' US of A."

"You're quite right, Bart. Totalitarianism is precisely where the denial of the true God leads a society. But let's not get into that just now. Instead, let me ask you, if morality is rooted in

nothing higher than social consensus, why is Nazism wrong? If the majority of a population accepts Nazi principles, who gives you the right to tell them they're wrong? They're just 'doin' their own thing,' as the saying goes."

"Yeah, but the whole history of the world, I mean, most cultures, societies, er, you can't just go around killing people. You just can't. It's not right. It's horrible!"

"Oh, you know I agree! I'm simply maintaining now that I can provide a reason for calling it dead wrong, using my principles. On your principles, you can only say something may be wrong "for yourself" (wherein 'wrong' means nothing more than personal preference). Yet, because you ARE created in the image of God, and because you ARE what He says you are (and NOT what you claim to be), you find yourself BEHAVING and reacting on MY Christian principles, expecting others to do the same. And all the while you deny the God, you insult the God, you incur the wrath of the God who has made you and all the things you claim are here "by chance." So you ACT as if there is an Almighty God, but you deny Him and refuse to serve Him."

"I think I don't feel so good. What should I do? I'm confused."

"Bart, listen. You're no different from me. The whole race has sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. Apart from His grace we do nothing but abuse His gifts and kindnesses that ought to lead us to repentance. As I hope I've shown you in part, we even use the gift of logical thinking to try to do away with the One who gave it to us, gave it so that we may know Him and love Him. But He is so loving that He sent Jesus Christ, His own eternal Son as an atoning sacrifice for sinners. When we see Christ's death, we see just how hateful our rebellion is in the sight of God. God wants you to repent, turn away from pretended autonomy. Satan has deceived you and you've been following his lie with pleasure. God demands that you look upon His Son, trust in Him, and be baptized. Whoever believes in Jesus Christ will never perish, but live eternally in God's favor and presence. I could tell you more, but I'm afraid your milk will get warm."

"THE MILK! I forgot all about it! You know, no one has ever told me about the Christian faith in this way. I think I'm beginning to see that I've been very wrong in my thinking, in my attitude, in my, uh, in my heart, I guess."

"And I can see that by the grace of God your epistemological self-consciousness has just been accelerated (Tee hee). Why not come back after your two deliveries and we'll talk some more."

"Could we? That'd be great. I'll be back in about a half-hour."

"Terrific. See you then. And God bless you."

"Uh, God, God bless you, too, Rev."

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# "God's Suffering Love?"

The August 1986 *Reformed Journal* featured a 6-page article by Nicholas Wolterstorff entitled "Why Care for Justice?" While it never defines what it means by "Justice," it stresses throughout that God has a special concern for the weak, the defenseless, the excluded, the miscasts, the outcasts, the outsiders, defining them particularly as the economically disadvantaged. It warns against the "ever-beckoning temptation for the . . . evangelical . . . to assume that all God really cares about for his human creatures here on earth is that they are born again and thus destined for salvation—to assume that the only kind of lostness which God cares about is religious lostness." It judges that "if we understand the shalom for which God longs in this narrow, pinched way, then all those biblical passages about God's love for justice must remain closed books to us."

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*Our problem with this kind of writing is that in it we are evidently dealing with a different kind of religion*

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What concerns us now is not so much the main thrust of the article as its portrayal of God's "suffering love." We are assured that "God's love . . . includes his suffering over the suffering and waywardness of his children. God is pained by the suffering of those whose neck is under the oppressor's boot. He is pained by the suffering of aliens and orphans and widows deprived of protection by law." "God's love for the victims of our world is his suffering love. It is in that love that his love of justice is grounded. The tears of God are the soil in which his love of justice is rooted." "And what the secularist sees merely as injustice, the believer sees as making God suffer." "Only if we purge our societies of injustice will God's suffering love for the victims of the world be relieved. The believer's doing of justice is grounded in her desire to answer the lament of God and relieve the divine suffering. It is grounded in her own suffering love of God."

While the Bible indeed assures us that God's "tender mercies are over all his works" (Ps. 145:9) and even says of His people "in all their affliction he was afflicted, the angel of his presence saved them" (Isaiah 63:9), does the Bible ever portray Him as the powerless "sufferer" who begs for the pity of man?

Although the article abounds in quotations from the Old Testament prophets, one looks in vain for anything like the dominant emphasis throughout those prophets on God's sovereignty. Consider, as just one example, Isaiah 40: "Who has directed the Spirit of the Lord, or as His counselor has taught Him? With whom did He take counsel and who instructed Him, and taught Him in the path of justice?" "Behold, the nations are as a drop in a bucket, and are counted as the small dust on the balance . . . All nations before Him are as nothing, and they are counted by Him less than nothing and worthless . . . It is He who sits above the circle of the earth, and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers . . ." (vv. 13, 14, 17, 22). Could anything be farther removed from the portrayal of a powerless "suffering god" than this prophetic awe of and testimony to the Almighty? (One is reminded of Blaise Pascal's remark in his 1654 "Memorial" about the "God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob, not of the philosophers and scholars.") Why should this plea for justice contain no hint of the pervasive Biblical testimony to Who and What God is and caricature Him as the pitiable sufferer instead of the Almighty Maker of Heaven and Earth? Is it because the "culturally conditioned" Bible's testimony to God's sovereignty is no longer acceptable in our anti-authoritarian culture and because "justice" in our time is no longer defined by God's laws, but only by popular sentiments about "human rights"?

A little reflection on the author's earlier booklet, *Reason within the Bounds of Religion*, shows, as reviewers have observed, that for it the Christian faith and life are not defined by the Bible or any unchangeable doctrines it reveals, but by the believer's subjective "Christian commitment." Our problem, therefore, with this kind of writing is that in it we are evidently dealing with a different kind of religion, worshipping an imagined deity who is quite different from the Living God who reveals Himself in the Holy Scriptures.\*

PDJ

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\* We are twice told, in this booklet, for example, that "Some of what God wishes us to believe may be fit and proper for us as his 'children' to believe, yet strictly speaking false." And, "It may be that some of what God says to us is, strictly speaking, false, accommodated to our frailty. Yet it may be that we are obliged to believe it" (pp. 99, 156). The Bible insists God "cannot lie" (Titus 1:2; Heb. 6:18), and warns us "Little children, keep yourselves from idols" (1 John 5:21).

# The Heart of the Gospel

John Blankespoor

“When the men came to Jesus they said, ‘John the Baptist sent us to you to ask, “Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else?”’ . . . So he replied to the messengers, ‘Go back and report to John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor’” (Luke 7:20,22).

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Just what do you expect to receive when you attend a Divine service? What, in your opinion, is a good sermon? What is the heart of the Gospel? This is what you may expect to hear, but what is it?

Similar questions arose in the heart and mind of John the Baptist, who, according to Jesus’ own words, was the greatest of all the prophets.

John had been imprisoned. He had been too outspoken. At least that’s what some people thought and still think. He had condemned king Herod’s marrying his brother’s wife. John had not kept still about it, like many prophets and preachers have done throughout the ages, refusing to hurt someone’s feelings, or become unpopular. The bold and courageous John the Baptist had done what God instructed Him to do — preach the truth. Because it displeased especially Herod’s new wife, Herodias, John was put in jail. He was left there for some time, by Herod, but also by the Messiah of whom he had often spoken and of whom he expected great things.

• • •

For about a year or year and a half Jesus and John had been contemporaneous preachers and

workers. John’s special work was to be the forerunner of Christ to prepare the way for Him. John expected an earthly kingdom. This is easy to understand. Wasn’t Jesus going to be the fulfillment of the many types of Him found in the Old Testament? And hadn’t there been types like David and Solomon and others as earthly kings ruling over earthly kingdoms? Add to all this the fact that John preached judgment. With the coming of Jesus, the Messiah, “the ax was laid at the root of the tree” of formal Israel. The tree was about to be cut down. Hadn’t there been prophets of judgment in the years that preceded John? Recall Isaiah’s and Jeremiah’s warnings of judgment upon apostate Israel. Think of what happened in Moses’ day to Korah, Dathan and Abiram. These judgments were prophetic of what was to come on the day of the Lord. John had said that the fan was in Jesus’ hand to purge the threshing floor of formal Israel. John warned and urged people to repent, receive remission of sins, and be baptised. Warning the people as the forerunner of Christ, John expected Christ to bring the judgments.

Now he was imprisoned. And Jesus, instead of remaining in the general area of Judea, “retreated” into the area of Galilee and stayed there.

Two things very likely disturbed John greatly. First, Jesus left him in jail and did nothing to bring about his release. Second, reports about the work of Jesus upset him.

There was no evidence of any kind of glory, power and majesty in the life and work of Jesus as king. And there was no judgment coming upon the people, as John had prophesied.

Jesus was doing the very opposite of what was expected — showing mercy, kindness and love to distressed and helpless people and making friends with the lower class of people. Can you imagine a

presidential candidate campaigning among terminally ill people in the hospitals, the blind and paralyzed and in vast homes for the aged? With such a compassion, how can he become the new and real king of Israel?

John's apprehensions seem to be well founded. Some people were no longer following Jesus, although they had at first been enthusiastically welcoming Him as the expected Messiah.

The Baptist has real problems. This can't be the right way! Could John have been mistaken in regarding Jesus of Nazareth as the promised Savior? A committee was appointed to ask Jesus about this extremely important matter.

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Notice the answer Jesus gives to this committee. "Go your way and tell John what you have seen and heard, how the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached. And blessed is he who shall not be offended in me."

Since I was a child I often wondered why Jesus didn't give John a direct and positive answer, affirming that He was indeed the promised One. Why didn't He? Then John could still have doubts as he continued to hear about the kind of work Jesus was doing.

Jesus' answer is based on a fundamental principle for all of us, for all our questions and problems. The Lord quoted from Scripture (Isaiah 35 and 61). Let John search the Scriptures. Then he will see that Jesus in His work is indeed the fulfillment of them.

• • •

Consider the content of Jesus' answer. He was helping and healing the sick, blind, deaf, paralyzed, and even raising dead people. This all concerns the physical needs of people. We know that this was not the primary purpose of His coming. He came to spiritually save us and then to renew our bodies in a new heaven and earth. This the Lord Jesus emphasized in His preaching. The miraculous healings were signs of the spiritual salvation. As He healed bodies, He came to save souls.

Notice how many of the people Jesus healed were "hopeless cases." They were helpless in their pain and misery. Jesus came to save helpless, lost sinners. In such people He is vitally interested. Although in the end only the believers, the elect, are saved, in the foreground, we see the nature of Jesus' work — to save lost sinners.

Was John wrong then in speaking about the judgment to come upon all formal religion and all sinners and unbelievers? Of course not. But Jesus came first to preach and show His love in saving, healing, forgiving and redeeming sinners. God always is displeased with all sin. But doom is to come especially upon those who reject the Savior.

The Lord Jesus spoke of wrath and judgment to come upon the world, as sinners and unbelievers. How often He spoke of judgment upon the Pharisees and the nominal church. Recently I read that Jesus in the Gospels spoke as much about wrath and judgment as He did about love and grace. How unbalanced many people and preachers are in these matters. Many of them preach only about love and mercy, and rarely, if ever, speak of God's terrible displeasure with sinners and unbelievers.

• • •

This work of Jesus reveals the very heart of God. Jesus was healing the sick, helping the lame, blind, deaf and paralyzed, out of love. Therein He truly revealed the Father. We are saved by grace alone. Jesus had compassion upon sinners as He went through the land doing good. It was sheer pleasure for Him to help and heal such people, pointing them to the great redemption, namely salvation from sin. He never grew tired of showing love to the unlovable. We are all unlovable as sinners before that holy and righteous Lord Jesus. Is there anything in us that makes us attractive to God? Absolutely nothing. In our sinful nature we must be repulsive to Him. God hates sin. Is there anything attractive, to a healthy person, in patients dying of cancer? Although no one really finds it a pleasure to visit such people, we do visit, or should, because we love them. Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. The angel said that His name was to be Jesus because He will save His people from their sins. Notice that He will save His people only. But they, too, are sinners. And Jesus in this great work preached to all who heard Him, showed His concern and love in healing and saving. This is the very heart of the Gospel, because it shows us what is in the heart of God.

Why then does He save? Because He loved His people.

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Where in all the religions of the world do we find anything like this? In this the true religion, the Christian religion is unique. In all other religions man has to do something to make himself worthy of the salvation they claim to give. In the Christian religion, God saves the unworthy through faith in Christ. Of course, we, too, must love Him. But we love because He first loved us.

What no eye has seen, or ear has heard, or has ever entered into the heart of any man, that God has revealed to us. And He continues to do it.

This love, this mercy of God is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that love Him.

Even John the Baptist had to learn this. So do we, and all the glory is His.

# The Duty of Being Concerned

Stephen M. Arrick

It seems almost unnecessary to speak on the topic, "The Duty of Being Concerned." Both the history of the Church, of Old and New Testaments, as well as the continuing history of the Church since the time of the New Testament, seem to demonstrate the need for God's people to be vigilant in their care of the Church and constantly on their guard against departures from the faith.

But it is necessary to speak of the "Duty of Being Concerned" because most are not genuinely and actively concerned and many discerning folk do not see concern to be *their* duty.

Unlike many, I have experienced the utter bankruptcy of liberalism as a member in some other denominations. You may have heard of such things. I have seen them. The warnings of the Scripture to the church must be taken seriously at all times, both when there is apparent peace and when there is obvious need for concern.

## I. Why Be Concerned?

"Why should I be concerned?" you may ask. Look at a few reasons:

**First**, because Scripture requires this concern of you. The Old Testament is a record of the continual failure of God's people. There are many faithful exceptions, a faithful remnant, and ultimately God champions His cause through Israel's unbelief. Still, the prophets spoke the message of warning and impending judgment because of Israel's failure to perform their covenant obligations out of a new-heart obedience to their Lord. The prophets voiced God's love and concern for His people. His voice was faithfully heard even where there was no apparent prospect for recovery.

The New Testament contains stern warnings by Jesus, exhortations, rebukes, and instructions in almost every book. Paul saw the Church through the eyes of Christ, a holy and spotless bride. Yet, he also knew the reality of depravity, the nature of his own heart, and the power of the world, the flesh, and the devil.

Because of preponderance of the warnings of Scripture and its prophecies about what has happened and will happen in the Church, we should be concerned.

**A second reason** you should be concerned is because history teaches that we must have a proper and timely concern. There is never a time when we can afford **not** to be concerned.

The Reformation in and throughout Europe is

all but dead, at least in the church bodies of its original representatives.

Reformed and Calvinistic traditions in the United States have largely disintegrated with only remnants trying to remain faithful.

The Christian Reformed Church stands practically alone as one of the older denominations (100 years or older) who have not to this point been substantially and sharply divided by major theological debate. The Lutherans, Presbyterians, Reformed Church, and Southern Baptists are all either splintered or sharply divided over theological issues.

God has blessed our own Church with a good memory of what we came from and where we don't want to return, with leadership to warn us of the threats of neo-orthodoxy and liberalism. Ironic, isn't it, that from the mid 50's to the present when the rhetoric about neo-orthodoxy and liberalism ceased, we began to feel the threats of its influences. As the saying goes, "Those who will not learn from the lessons of history are destined to repeat them."

**Third**, there are many personal reasons why you should be concerned. The Scripture says, "take heed unto thyself," and that is reason enough. The Christian lives what he eats. If he eats the gospel, he lives eternally. If he eats some other gospel, he remains dead. If he eats solid doctrine, he grows. If he eats man's opinion and innovation, he starves. Liberalism, whether it be in the form of outright denials of biblical truth, higher criticism, or a new hermeneutic, robs the Church of its food. It starves the child that lives, and cannot give birth to the children yet to be.

## II. About What Shall We Be Concerned?

Ours should be a **spiritual concern**, a concern about the gospel, the pulpit, and the pew.

Basic to our spiritual life is the proclamation of salvation by faith in Christ. The gospel gives birth to faith which embraces Christ as Lord and Savior. Contrary to popular opinion, the gospel is not the last thing to go, but along with all other articles of faith, is progressively supplanted by another gospel. The set of doctrines which express the Reformed faith are an intricate and interdependent package. It is impossible to alter any significant doctrines or practice without affecting all. There is no domino theory to doctrine. We cannot stop the advance of change-oriented, denial-oriented liberalism before the articles of redemption fall. When our doctrine of

Scripture does not acknowledge the authority of all of the Word of God for all times and cultures (as our Creeds confess), we have not knocked down only one doctrine; we have shaken the entire table.

The pulpit couples God's authority; in His Word with the powerful working of God's Spirit. Paul's preaching was powerful, "a demonstration of power," not because he was a great and eloquent preacher, but because he preached, taught, and wrote the revelation of Jesus Christ. He preached with the knowledge and conviction that everything God has revealed in His Word is true.

There is a great deal of difference between hearing, preaching, and experiencing the ministry of God's Word, proclaimed with the power and conviction of the Authority of the Word of God, and preaching and ministry based upon higher criticism and popular opinions, and innovations.

The pew is where our concern "meets the road," for if we and our children are not experiencing genuine conversion, are not being challenged to be and live as believers, are not experiencing the power of God's Spirit in church life, we have great cause to be concerned. The problem is in the pulpit, and equally in the pew. We must be concerned enough to demand piety and biblical orthodoxy from the pulpit. We should never sit idly by, becoming increasingly frustrated, complacent, and apathetic. We cannot settle for a "deceitful handling of the Word of God" by those who will not "handle the truth in a straightforward" manner.

Our concern should be *biblical concern*, a concern about the Bible.

Our concern about the Bible should be that we insist on and defend its **integrity**. The methods of higher criticism and their biblical "interpretations" attack the Bible's integrity. Such high critical methods produce only questions and speculations.

We cannot allow the Bible's Author to be assailed by allowing its writers to be treated as writers of myths, legends, stories, and opinions.

The higher critic's *low view* of Scripture, will not "acknowledge God to be true and every man a liar."

Ours is a concern to be biblical, to conform every belief, every practice, and every thought to the mind of God. One of our God-given strengths is our Creedal and Confessional standards. In these we have the statement of our Catholic and Evangelical faith. Yet, many treat the Creeds and Confession like toys, which have lost their charm and fascination. We carelessly throw them in the corner and begin looking for something new.

The Creeds and Confessions are not toys; they are tools — the great tools of the Reformation. They were constructed of big chunks of the Word of God, smelted in the fiery process of challenge and opposition, formed to be used by the children of the Reformation that they might always be Reformed "according to the Word of God."

To confess the Creeds with integrity, appreciation, and thankfulness to God is not our option, but our duty. To insist that they be preached, taught, and defended is our responsibility.

There is much envy out in the churches toward the evangelical world. That world appears to have glitz, glamour, charisma, and excitement; it appears to have everything that we want. In reality, we have what it seeks and desperately needs. We have the Truth. We must continue to preach, teach, defend, and promote this Truth. We have mighty tools, while it is still trying to discover the right pieces. The Reformed faith is a thoroughly and consistently biblical faith.

Our concern should be about the **Reformed Faith**. I came into the Christian Reformed Church as a Calvinist, a traditional five-point Calvinist. I've heard that condemned as "that old scholastic stuff," "wooden biblicism" and other names that I don't recall. I would almost rather hear it condemned than to see it ignored.

There are only two roads of departure from the Reformed faith. One road generally leads to a broad evangelicalism. This road provides a spectrum of evangelical belief from pentacostalism to fundamentalism.

The other road of departure from the Reformed faith is a bankrupt liberalism. Its voice turns from "change" to "denial" rather quickly, until truth turns to relativism, and relativism to agnosticism.

If forced to choose between these two, I would much rather stand with evangelicals. At least they are brothers in the Lord. But, I would rather not have to choose. Why should I knowingly travel either path, if revival of the Reformed faith is still possible.

Evangelicalism is the Reformed faith in its infancy. Why would I want to go back to infancy? I better serve the cause of Christ if I maintain my biblical distinctiveness and share that with my evangelical world.

Our children are not (for the most part) learning who John Calvin is and what he taught. If they are, they are hearing about him in a derogatory fashion and are told to dismiss his teaching. I don't know what Calvinism is to you, but to me it is a "godly preoccupation with the doctrine of salvation." What could be more foundational than that? What is a Calvinist? A sinner who has been saved by God's grace. Every true believer is a Calvinist in the narrowest sense of the word. The evangelical world is ready **now** for an in-depth, biblical explanation of faith and salvation. The question is, have we so completely lost sight of our Calvinistic heritage that we have nothing to share with them?

We have more than just an explanation of salvation to give to them. As Abraham Kuyper said, "Calvinism is a life-system." The sanctifying and redeeming grace of God must continue to be brought to bear upon our culture. To proclaim Christ as Sovereign Lord over all creation is the goal of our Calvinism. What could be more

inclusive than that? Yet most have lost sight of Calvin and Kuyper, or are trying to run the system without the gospel as its heart. You can't run the life-system of Calvinism without a Bible that speaks with final and timeless authority, without a gospel that demands that we be born again, without churches nurturing members conformed to the image of Jesus Christ. Pray to God that we return to both the form and the spirit of the Reformed faith.

Fourthly, we should be concerned about our mission as a Church. Will our Synods be forced to follow the social agenda of popular, progressive leadership? The recent past has shown that Synod is engaged in a rather interesting game of "Mother, May I" with its membership. It seems that almost any question asked that serves the purpose of the popular, progressive agenda receives all of the time, attention, and resources necessary to enact change. "Mother, may I interpret the Bible with a new and improved hermeneutic? May I dance? May I have women office-bearers? May I use higher criticism to interpret Genesis and feed the fire of theistic evolution?" "Well, yes you can. After all, you had the courage to ask, and these things are for the good of the family."

What will our answer be as Synod's agenda gets cluttered with questions about other issues that we have always believed to have been settled by the Word of God? What about Liberation Theology? Homosexuality? Nuclear disarmament? Women elders? Women preachers? If recent past history repeats itself, if someone has the courage to ask the question on the popular progressive agenda, the church will take all the time and resources necessary to enact change.

What is our mission? Have we nothing more important to do than engross ourselves in such church politicking? Is every soul surrounding our local churches aware of the gospel witness? Is every mission field conquered? Have we arrived at such perfect sanctification in Christ that we can afford the luxury of debating the faith and practice already embraced by our members? What corporate contempt before God, that we should neglect Christ's great commission and spend our time and resources on things that do not work for love and edification. God grant that we may all repent of such self-centered contempt for God's Mission and the great tools He has given us to accomplish it.

### III. How should I be concerned?

A. **Prayerfully.** Paul said "and I pray" in the midst of every situation. We must prayerfully commit our concerns to God. We must ask God to bless us with wisdom and discernment to make our concerns active and constructive.

B. **Actively.** The Scripture says, "earnestly contend for the faith." We must be aggressive, by every means lawful, to stop the cancer which has entered our body.

C. **Informed.** Paul said, "It is reported to me," and we can do nothing about problems if we do not know the facts. We can also do nothing if we do not devise a working and patient plan for victory.

D. **Militantly.** Paul said, "fight the good fight of faith." He said it of himself and commended it for others. Do you love your faith enough to fight for it? Do you cherish your salvation enough to work for it? Do you love your church enough to contend for her Truth?

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*Rev. Stephen M. Arrick is the pastor of the Calvary C.R. Church at Lowell, Michigan. This is the substance of a speech presented on Jan. 8, 1987 at the Caledonia CR Church at the organizational meeting of the Thornapple Valley Chapter of the Committee of Concerned Members of the CRC.*

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## Who Am I?

Glenn P. Palmer

My Hebrew name is Hadassah, which means myrtle.

I am an orphan.

I am of the tribe of Benjamin, a descendant of Kish.

My father is Abihail.

I was raised by my cousin.

I am lovely in form and features.

I was placed under the care of Hegai, the king's eunuch.

I saved my people through my good looks.

Who am I?

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Although I lived in the Old Testament, I should remind you of Pentecost, for the Spirit of God came on me mightily.

Even though I was a prominent man, I was not prepared for the dramatic change that took place when the Spirit of God came on me with power. I prophesied with the prophets of Gibeah, who were singing (like Pentecostals) with lyres, tambourines, flutes and harps.

Later, in order to seize my opponent I sent men to Naioth at Ramah, but the Spirit of God came upon them, so that they prophesied instead of capturing him. I sent another band of soldiers and they prophesied too. Undaunted, I sent a third group and they also prophesied. Then I marched off myself to see what the problem was, and the Spirit of God came upon me. Despite my intentions, I stripped off my robe and prophesied. Therefore people said, "Is \_\_\_\_\_ also among the prophets?"

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*Esther 2:7; Sam. 10:1-13; 19:18-24*

# Creation / Evolution Legislation in Louisiana

Aaldert Mennega

In 1981 the state of Louisiana passed a law, called the "Balanced treatment for Creation-Science and Evolution-Science Act." This law says that if teachers deal with the topic of the origin of man, of life, of the earth, or of the universe, they must give a "balanced treatment" to the theories of creation and evolution. And neither theory must be presented as proven scientific fact. (1)

The question might be asked, first of all, whether there should be equal treatment for both evolution and creation in the schools. How does it have to be equal? Equal in quality, or in time? What makes it balanced? Certainly we can not be purely objective! Does not much depend on the perspective or orientation of each individual school? When dealing with these matters, the subject material should first of all be presented in a very factual way. The evolution or creation perspective can then be added to that. After all, the perspective of the Christian schools is not the same as that of the "public" schools. If they were the same, there would be no need for separate Christian schools.

One would also question whether it is the prerogative or proper sphere for the Supreme Court to rule what may and what may not be taught in the science classroom. Government may set goals and standards, but may content of subject material be dictated by the legislature? We would expect that in our free country there would be room for academic freedom regarding the treatment of creation and evolution. And we would hope that every instructor then would be objective and considerate in his presentation of these two positions, and not offend any of the students in the class.

It seems that it would be extremely difficult for an atheistic evolutionist to make an acceptable presentation of the creation position, when he himself does not believe in Jehovah God as Creator. Would he not be tempted to put the creation story and the creationist position in a bad light? On the other hand, how can the creationist

science teacher make a presentation in which the story of evolution comes off as being credible? Would he not point out the fallacies in the theory as he sees them? Certainly it is hard for either side to make a balanced presentation of both views.

We know, of course, *that* we cannot prove *that* God created, much less *how* he created. We know about God's creative acts only because this has been revealed to us by the Creator Himself. There is no other way of attaining this kind of knowledge. So we accept this by faith. But what about the evolutionist? We know, too, that the process of evolution is only an assumed process, and that it cannot be demonstrated to be taking place today, or to have taken place in the past. One evolutionist (2) clearly stated that the evolution of not a single species has been demonstrated. The theory of evolution then, too, is accepted on the basis of faith. Neither theory can be demonstrated as "scientific fact."

Is creation then to be equated with religion, as is often done in anti-creation literature?(3) And is evolution to be equated with science? The answer to that must be an unequivocal NO! Whether one believes that God created or that living things evolved by natural processes is a person's starting point, and not something one concludes from scientific studies. While both come with their religious convictions, both can also be scientific. The world of inorganic and living things out there is real, and we all have equal access to it. Facts are facts. And they can be investigated by any scientist. What they do with these facts may not be the same, but it can be ascertained whether or not the scientific work they do is rigorous, and whether it is consistent with their basic starting point and commitments. That is crucial. And if their work is indeed rigorous and consistent, we can call it scientific, whether or not we agree with the conclusion.

If I were hired at a secular university to teach courses in Biology, I would commit myself to presenting the facts as they are. I would then give

both the secular evolutionist viewpoint and the Christian viewpoint. I would have to point out how these two viewpoints differ and how they both attempt to be consistent with the basic presuppositions with which they start. Both can be reasonable, if we consider their starting point. And both have a right to be called scientific. In presenting these materials, my own position would, of course, be obvious.

It appears that the Louisiana court will need a lot of wisdom to decide on this issue of balanced treatment. It will certainly need a good criterion on the basis of which to decide which textbooks may or must be used by the science teachers. Let us pray that both the legislators and the science teachers will be able to see the issues from the right perspective and that justice may be done to the students of that state.

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(1) As reported in *Christian Renewal* 5(2):1+7; Sept. 22, 1986

- (2) Blackwelder, R. E. *Taxonomy; a Text and Reference Book*. Wiley, N.Y. 1967, p.363: "In fact, for it to be possible to claim that there are phylogenies known, one would have to define a phylogeny as the supposed or postulated history of the species. If it is defined as the actual history, surely there are none that could qualify."
- (3) See for example the public statements by:
- a) the American Humanist Association, claiming in their Statement Affirming Evolution as a Principle of Science, that "Creationism is not scientific, but is a purely religious view held by some religious sects and persons . . ."
  - b) the Iowa Academy of Science saying in their 1981 position statement that "creationism when called 'scientific' is a religious doctrine posed as science."
  - c) the Iowa department of Public Instruction which in its 1978 position paper on Creation-Evolution and Public Education states: "Generally creationism is a religious concept" (p. 1). And on p. 4 it says: "Students should be advised that it is their responsibility, as informed citizens, to have creationism explained to them by theological experts."

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## The Boesky Case

During especially the last two years news reports have been making us aware of the ever increasing number of big businesses, some of them with long established reputations for producing dependable products, that have been bought by new owners or are threatened with what are sometimes called hostile "takeovers." This process suddenly got general attention throughout the news media when the government announced its court action against Mr. Ivan Boesky, fining him a \$100 million penalty and banishing him from the stock market. *Time* magazine on December 1 devoted an illuminating nine-page article by George Russel to what it called the "enormous scandal . . . spreading at the core of America's investment community, touching some of the biggest moneymen in the country." The article's title was "Going after the Crooks" and its subtitle read, "As Ivan sings, traders quake and investors weep." Such a report could arouse anyone's curiosity. What is creating this sensation throughout the business world?

The Boesky case as analyzed in the article shows how "Wall Street high rollers had been ripping off millions of dollars by trading on knowledge not available to the general public." The case of Mr. Boesky was leading to the government investigation of many other financial

leaders including, according to the article, "some of the biggest names in the corporate-takeover business." The report highlighted the role of what are called "junk bonds," "the high-interest but risky investment vehicle that has provided much of the financing for the stock market's takeover frenzy."

Although Mr. Boesky had gotten into trouble for contracting for illegal inside information, one banker observed that "I have great trouble in knowing the difference between insider information and a very fine research report." In other words, the difference between illegal information and the shrewd knowledge of the market that any legitimate investor seeks are evidently not always clear-cut. It is becoming apparent to the public that the small investor cannot begin to compete with the large well-informed traders who have power to influence as well as gauge the market, and the number of small individual investors in stock has been "steadily shrinking."

Even where an attempted takeover is not successful, a company, in order to resist the hostile effort to buy it out, may have to spend enormous sums of money to repurchase enough of its stock needed to maintain its control. The article mentions such an unsuccessful 2½-week

effort to buy Goodyear Tire and Rubber which netted the raiders \$93 million profit. A congresswoman, commenting on the disastrous results of such corporate raiding, was quoted as saying that, "profitable companies are being driven into debt, American jobs lost, and American businesses are being taken overseas, all so that a few enormously wealthy individuals can add to their personal fortunes."

"As news of these abuses is coming to public attention, pressure is rising for the congress to take legal action against them. That, the article observes, is not as simple as it might seem. When a business becomes inefficient and unproductive, discontented stockholders may need the freedom to oust the incompetent management by an attempt to take it over.

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*Everywhere the idea is being promoted that it is smart to get ahead not by hard work but by tricky dealing, legal or illegal.*

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Perhaps the most perceptive comment on this matter was that of "an eminent Washington securities lawyer": "The millions and millions that are made out of nonproductive deal making represent the collapse of real morality in our markets." In trying to better understand what has been happening we perhaps ought to begin by observing that there is nothing inherently wrong in buying and owning stock in the companies that comprise our business world. The capital with which our factories are built and operated usually has to be obtained at least partly by organizing a corporation and selling stock to share their ownership among many investors. When, however, today's corporate raiders are buying and selling companies with no interest or concern in their productive operation, but only to make a fast and unearned profit on the transactions, it is obvious that the stock market is being misused as a tool for theft on an enormous scale. (We may recall the Heidelberg Catechism's explanation of the eighth commandment, that God "forbids not only outright theft and robbery, punishable by law. But in God's sight theft also includes cheating and swindling our neighbor by schemes made to appear legitimate. . . ." And it ought not to be overlooked that the evil so sensationally apparent in the case of the stock market is not restricted to the relatively few large and powerful investors, but becomes increasingly evident all through our business world. One can hardly buy any kind of merchandise without encountering some extra incentive to take a chance on some kind of "sweepstakes." And the governments, instead of trying to curb the abuses, are getting in on the act on a massive scale by pushing tickets for their own lotteries. Everywhere the idea is being promoted that it is smart to get ahead not by hard work but by tricky dealing, legal or

illegal. When Christians get carried away with these popular vices, they are not exonerated from their consequences, as God's prophets and apostles always had to warn us. Judgment and correction has to begin at home, (1 Peter 4:17; Mt. 7:3-5; Lk. 6:41f.). Herber Schlossberg's remarkable 1983 book, *Idols for Destruction* (May 1985 *Outlook*), citing Hosea 8:4, "they made idols for their own destruction," called attention to the way whatever people idolize becomes the means God uses to judge and punish them. This stock market scandal reveals exactly the kind of judgment God is visiting upon us by means of one of our most popular idols. In it organized greed is destroying our national industries and economy.

What can be done about it? It appears that the government will have to take some corrective measures. Although such corrective action has been restrained by the notion that "the free market will correct itself," that does not seem to have been happening. The Apostle Paul reminded us that God in His providence has given us government as "God's servant to do you good" and "an agent of justice to bring punishment on the wrongdoer" (Rom. 13:4). We recall that in His laws for His people in the Old Testament (Lev. 25:27) God curbed the unlimited accumulation of property by the few by requiring the return of lands to the families of their original owners each 50th year. Isn't such government interference with the free market "socialism?" It is not. Socialism promotes government ownership instead of government checks on the abuses of private ownership. In doing that, socialism robs us of proper government protection against the greed and incompetence of its own officials. The current scandal may call for some government corrective measures.

Legal remedies, while they may, in God's mercy, to some extent restrain evils, do not really eliminate them, because they cannot eliminate their causes. God's word shows us that God's judgments on and even through such evils (Romans 1:18ff.) show in all kinds of ways the need for the saving and transforming work of the gospel of Christ in our hearts and lives, including even the way we handle our money. Paul, applying that gospel, wrote (Eph. 4:28) "He who has been stealing, must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need." The genuine transformation brought about by that gospel was demonstrated in an especially dramatic way in the change in the life of Zacchaeus, the rich publican (Lk. 19:1-10). When that notorious financial manipulator announced, "Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount," the Lord said, "Today salvation has come to this house. . . For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost."

PDJ.

# Why Study Theology?

Russ Pulliam

Ten years ago, had I been asked to write an essay on the value of systematic theology, I might have submitted a blank page.

Since then, I've had help from friends—and now can offer some explanation for a study of theology, not just for a future pastor or a candidate for the ministry, but for the lay person as well.

I'm coming from the perspective of an editorial writer for a daily newspaper. For several years, I've prayed for the ability to write on contemporary issues, applying the Scriptures and my personal commitment to Jesus Christ. Many of the answers to those prayers can be traced to my study of systematic theology.

For some time I had resisted the idea that I should study theology. God had to overcome several prejudices in my mind and heart.

I had to learn, first of all, that theology was not synonymous with the theological attacks on the Christian faith I had read in college. I remembered essays by Paul Tillich and other theologians, who seemed so unclear and confused in proclaiming anything about God or Jesus Christ. I assumed that theology belonged in the ivory tower and had little to do with the practical affairs that newspapers report and analyze—crime, politics, war and peace, famine, and fires.

I wanted to know the Bible, but I couldn't see how theology would help me do that. Theology seemed abstract and not directly related to my pressing questions: Is God a conservative or a liberal? Which way should God's person vote on a given bill before the legislature?

Then, reading church history began to help me gain a different perspective and removed some of those objections. Many of the people who made big differences for Christ's kingdom, I discovered, were either theologians or had a good theological education. Augustine, John Calvin, Martin Luther, John Knox, John Wesley, Jonathan Edwards, Abraham Kuyper, and Charles Spurgeon all made their marks on history because they had studied theology. Certainly their achievements were never in spite of their theological education.

Gradually, I was convinced I needed to tackle systematic theology. I found special help through the lectures of R. C. Sproul of Ligonier Ministries, and through *Systematic Theology* by Louis Berkhof. Sproul and Berkhof provided quite a contrast. Sproul seemed able to make the dullest theological matter humorous and interesting, often

with contemporary application. Berkhof could make even interesting issues a bit dry and abstract.

*The Institutes of the Christian Religion* by John Calvin provided a lively approach to many of the same subjects. More briefly, James Boice's four short volumes, *Foundations of the Christian Faith*, gave a good overview of theology, with very contemporary applications and comments. Boice's emphasis on practical application is very important, and too often missing in other theological writing, with the outstanding exception of the Puritan writers. "All that is needed," Boice suggests in *The Sovereign God*, the first volume in the series, "is that we take these truths down off the high shelf of theology and put them to work as we live our daily lives."

The Puritans have given us a good emphasis on practical application in books like *Body of Divinity* by Thomas Watson and *Mystery of Providence* by John Flavel. *The Atonement and Messiah the Prince*, both by William Symington of Scotland, have helped me see how Christ and his redemptive work on the cross stand at the center of the Bible and any theology we seek to develop from God's Word.

Has all this study made a difference in my understanding and my writing? Although there's a lifetime ahead of me to keep on studying and reading, first the Bible and then these theologians who knew the Bible so well, I can find specific examples where the study I've done has helped.

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*Or is his revelation so hidden  
that we are left to guesswork,  
or perhaps to our own  
manmade laws?*

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Am I writing about crime? Augustine notes in *The Confessions* that sin is sometimes the only explanation for lawbreaking, despite all the modern efforts to develop a hundred other theories and never use the word sin at all. "I chose to steal not because I was compelled to by poverty or hunger, but just from a bellyful of sin and a contempt for justice," he wrote. "I stole what I already had plenty of—and what I had was in better condition. I didn't take any pleasure in what I stole—just enjoyed the stealing and the sinning."

I find more generally that systematic theology touches (often indirectly) on many of the crucial issues I have to comment on. The early chapters of Berkhof's *Systematic Theology* cover revelation and whether God can be known to us. I was getting bogged down and bored, wondering what in the world I was reading this for when the world is passing by, fires and murders are waiting to be written up, and labor strikes are starting and stopping.

Suddenly the significance of Berkhof's commentary hit me. I realized he was describing one of the most crucial issues of our time. Does God reveal himself and his will clearly? Or is his revelation so hidden that we are left to guesswork, or perhaps to our own manmade laws? So many people assume the latter, in its varying forms. Perhaps most commonly in the U.S. today, people suppose that God reveals himself differently to different people. For some, he says adultery and abortion are permissible; to others, he may say no. For all such people, his revelation is subjective, changing from one person to another. We can't really know what God is saying, at least with universal clarity. So we must be pluralistic and keep our religion private, never daring to know God's will for anyone but ourselves. After all, the next fellow probably has gotten a different revelation from God, and it wouldn't be fair to impose a personal, private perspective on anyone else.

The Bible nowhere teaches this relativistic perspective, which creates a problem Boice

identifies in *The Sovereign God* as the lack of unity of knowledge: "Much is known. In the sense of information or technical knowledge, more is known today than at any previous time in history. Yet the kind of knowledge that integrates information and therefore gives meaning to life is strangely absent."

There is an alternative to this sea of relativism. It is the classical Christian position that God and Jesus Christ have offered a clear revelation of their purposes and plans in the Scriptures. This position requires a thorough search of those Scriptures—and practical applications of them among Christians may still differ. But it would be arrogant to avoid systematic theology in such a study of Scripture.

Can you imagine a study of 20th century evangelism without familiarity with the work of Billy Graham? Or would you write a history of the United States without some study of the Founding Fathers and the Constitution and Declaration of Independence? But it is just as shortsighted to bypass the works of Augustine, Calvin, Luther, and other classic theologians while attempting to apply Romans 12:1-2 to contemporary issues. A study of systematic theology can help develop an eternal perspective in a fast-moving society looking for short-term results.

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*The author is an editorial writer for the 'Indianapolis News.' He worships in the Reformed Presbyterian Church (RPNA) at Indianapolis. Reprinted from the Jan. 14, 1987 Presbyterian Journal with which we have a reciprocal arrangement.*

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## "Vision 21": A Nightmare

J. Tuininga, Lethbridge, Alta.

"Vision 21"—a real nightmare! A concerned member and ex-elder of another congregation phoned me and said he couldn't sleep after he had read this document. Little wonder.

The late Dr. K. J. Popma in his seven-volume work on the Heidelberg Catechism often warns against hierarchy and over-organization in the church of the Lord Jesus. He rails against the mentality which would, in his words, organize the church to death. We have an example of that mentality in this document. In many respects it represents the application of Madison Avenue business techniques to the church of Christ. And that is grossly evil. The Bible presents such a different picture of the church. Fact is, we find

precious little in the Bible about anything that even comes close to what we know today as our "denominational setup." All the emphasis in the Scriptures is on the local congregation, and that congregation has fellowship with other like-minded congregations, but local autonomy is strong and there is very little of any tight-knit organization. In the future I hope to address this topic a bit more.

To be sure, there are statements in this document to the same effect. It wishes to maintain our basic presbyterian system with original authority vested in the consistory of the local church. The intent is no doubt a good one. But meanwhile this document takes a giant step

John Bouma  
Doon, Iowa 51235

further in the direction of hierarchy and centralization! And that is the last thing we need in our churches. We desperately need decentralization, not further centralization. We already have far too much "boardism" and "executive committeeism," and now this document recommends the establishment of what one could call a "super-board" with frightening powers! It is enough to make the hairs of one's head stand on end! The good Reformed statements that one can find in this document are buried beneath a mountain of administrative and organizational rubble.

We read over and over again (ad nauseam) of the "executive board of synod" which is an "administrative arm of synod" with almost super-human powers. All the power of the denomination would be vested in this "executive board" for all practical intents and purposes. As said earlier, we already have a maze of organizational techniques in our church. Says the report, "The Chr. Ref. Church entered 1986 with five major bodies, a Synodical Interim Committee, fourteen standing committees, and a dozen study committees." It is enough to give one the creeps, and to rob one of sleep. We ought to have a radical dismantling of the whole affair. And perhaps the committee thinks so too. But now they want to replace it with something much worse, and what they propose will get us from the frying pan into the fire. It is hard for me to imagine that a committee of Reformed people could come up with a document like this. It ought to be radically rejected by the synod of 87 and buried till the Lord returns. And let us instead take steps, major steps, toward dismantling the bureaucratic machinery of the CRC, and return to the simple and uncomplicated church structure of the New Testament. It would do our churches a mountain of good.

The good Lord have mercy on us if we adopt this plan. We could then write "Ichabod" across our denominational face.

*The 1987 U.S. Ministers' Conference sponsored by the Banner of Truth will be held at Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan, May 26-29, 1987.*

*Speakers include Rev. Iain Murray, Rev. Douglas McMillan, Dr. Wayne Mack, Rev. Walter J. Chantry, Rev. Ernest C. Reisinger and James S. Peaster. Registration information may be obtained by contacting the Conference Secretary, P.O. Box 621, Carlisle, PA 17013.*

## Comment and Opinion

John H. Piersma

*Is it really that easy?* In the Jan. 5, 1987 issue of *The Banner* our denominational pundit, Rev. William Buursma, answers a question which ought to strike at the heart of any sincerely Christian Reformed Church member. The question deals with the reasons for our existence as a church. The questioner says that "open communion, irregular catechism preaching, declining house visitation, and hymn singing" were the reasons for separation from the Reformed Church in America back in 1857. The question is, if effect, "Aren't these reasons inadequate and aren't we therefore a schismatic denomination?"

Buursma's answer: "Honesty requires that we acknowledge that the reasons given for leaving the Reformed Church in America were inadequate." In other words, the questioner is right. We are schismatics. Blessed schismatics ("God has richly blessed the Christian Reformed Church"), but our origins are such as to require confession of sin (so I interpret his "honest" acknowledgement).

I'll try to be fair to my friend Buursma even though my blood-pressure makes that difficult. It is hard not to resent his all-too-casual and really wrong presentation of the facts concerning my ecclesiastical legitimacy.

May I point out the following?

If we grant that the list of reasons for forming a separate denomination is fully accurate, are the items mentioned "minor" in character? Doesn't "open communion" touch one of the most sacred of all Christian institutions (the Lord's Supper, 1 Cor. 11:29)? Doesn't that relate also to one of the indispensable marks of the true church, namely, church discipline? Doesn't "irregular catechism preaching" touch one of the most basic of divine provisions for our spiritual life and growth, namely, the preaching of the Word? Doesn't "house visitation" reflect on another inestimably serious matter, namely, loving, continuous, spiritual, pastoral care? And if "hymn singing" isn't all that important, why are we spending an enormous amount of money to insure the provision of a *Psalter Hymnal* which will preclude the use of inferior, even very bad hymns?

Sorry Bill! Your answer is too easy!

We are offering the book, *R.B. — A Prophet in the Land* by Edward Herrema, to all fellowship members and all new subscribers to the *Outlook* for \$3.00 including cost of mailing. We're able to make this offer as the result of a very special price from your publisher, Paideia Press, Ltd. Please address your orders to the offices of the Reformed Fellowship, 4855 Starr St., S.E., Grand Rapids, Michigan 49506.