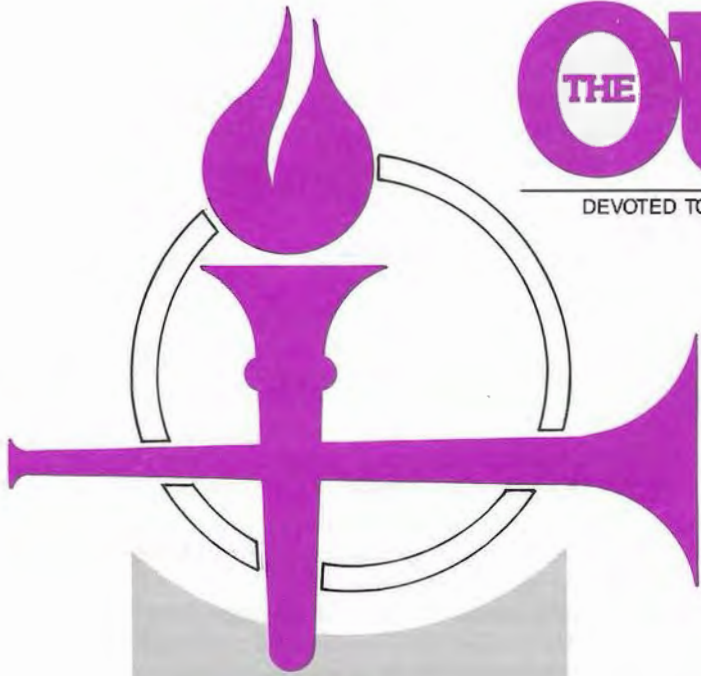


THE OUTLOOK

DEVOTED TO THE EXPOSITION AND DEFENSE OF THE REFORMED FAITH

APRIL 1987



Deaconesses

**The Bible
and Evolution**

Danger of Concern

N. Kloosterman on "The Danger of Being Concerned"

The word "concerned" has become rather common in some of our circles, the more as it has been appropriated by the group calling itself "Concerned Members of the CRC." Despite a snowstorm, a goodly number of people, especially younger people, ventured out on the evening of Jan. 29 to hear Rev. Nelson D. Kloosterman of Mid-America Reformed Seminary (at Orange City, Iowa) speak at the Dutton church on "The Danger of Being Concerned." The speaker suggested that four questions need to be raised in some self-examination about the measure and extent of our concern.

1. "Is Your Concern Comprehensive Enough?"

In our present conditions, said the speaker, we must beware of both exaggerated anxiety and of too easy a sense of relief. Symptoms of our present problems are widespread and involve faith, doctrine and morality. They appear not only in church, but in every area of our lives. They are evident in our schools and threaten our children and grandchildren. If they continue for another ten years we may properly ask whether those children and grandchildren will hear and know the gospel of Christ at all. Treating a cancer in only one area will do little good if we fail to see that it has spread through the whole body. We must try to treat the whole of the disease.

2. "Is Your Concern Constructive Enough?"

We must not succumb to panic, but seek a cure by aggressive and constructive use of the remedy of God's Word. We need to do this in education. If we are uncomfortable after being subjected to twenty years of liturgical experiments, do we know why we need a liturgy or what the sense of our church services — and sermons — ought to be? Our concern, if it is to be constructive, must be educated and educational. If we don't know church order and try to follow it, our reaction may be dangerous because it is hypocritical. Ignorance and carelessness about polity cause us to "shoot ourselves in the foot." Don't only criticize what is wrong, but promote what is right. The speaker suggested the need for workshops to

study what men in office and consistories ought to do. The Bible must be used as the guide for church office and discipline.

One of our greatest dangers at present may be the danger that concerned people be satisfied with merely complaining. Such mere grumbling reminded the speaker of the noisy little Dutch motorbikes (called "bromfietsen") which despite their loud whining changed nothing by their passage. Being contented with futile complaining may divert us into forgetting the Biblical teaching about the Lord's church. Both of the "concerned" organizations in the Netherlands (in the old state church and the Reformed (GKN) churches) succeeded only in retarding, but never in reversing the slide into apostasy. We must beware of developing only a nucleus of complainers instead of a needed movement for Reformation.

3. "Is Your Concern Consistent Enough?"

A real Reformatory movement must work from inside to the outside of the church and must seek consistency of faith and practice. If we are going to stop supporting some of those agencies who promote the un-Biblical ordination of women, we must consistently stop supporting others who do the same. If we say, as over 50 of our church hodies did, that the synod action in approving women's ordination was contrary to the Word of God, and then have those objections brushed aside by the 1985 synod, they and we face the question. "Did you mean it?" If we meant what we said, and the synod refused to repent from its defiance of God's Word, what does God's Word command us to do next? Here "punches are being pulled," as leaders are now silent. If the denomination ignores the Biblical call to repentance and we then do nothing, the devil will rejoice at his victory. The coming synod now faces an excellent overture from Illiana to reverse the previous synods' actions. It is based on one ground: those actions are against the Word of God and are therefore, sin. Is our concern consistent enough? Doesn't the Bible call for a holy expulsion of sin — a holy separation of righteousness from immorality? Doesn't this bear on who may preach

in your pulpit? Doesn't this decide on how far you may cooperate with church assemblies?
 "Anyone who runs ahead and does not continue in the teaching of Christ does not have God. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not take him into your house or welcome him. Anyone who welcomes him shares in his wicked work" (2 John 9,10).

4. "Is Your Concern Committed Enough?"
 The speaker observed that in a church situation in which various groups seem to be pursuing personal hobbies, some pursuing social justice, others evangelism or preaching, we are perceived as merely committed to being concerned. Is our commitment grounded in the Scriptures? Is it motivated by love for the church of Jesus Christ (which is not the Christian Reformed Church of the 1940's and of trusted past leaders). Do we love that church of today's people, saints and sinners, and officers? Commitment involves not merely "love," but "blood" — the willingness to not only live, but also die for the cause. Will we give up receiving calls, or sacrifice sociability, recognition, time and hobbies, to do the study and work that real commitment requires? Will we pray for our schools as well as our churches and for our counselling services? We will be driven back to the positive demands and the redemptive call of the Scriptures to restore church discipline. Such a consistent commitment may cost friend and family, and will require the daily sacrifice of our own sinful flesh. He who calls to repentance must be first to heed the summons. That concern brings us here tonight. It is not those who are merely concerned that will inherit the kingdom of heaven, but the obedient who do the will of our Father in heaven — His will for the discipline of the church. Ours must be a comprehensive, constructive and consistent obedience. This was the speaker's call to consistent and persistent actions.

—PDJ

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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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EDITORIAL AND CIRCULATION OFFICES

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4855 Starr Street, S.E., Grand Rapids, MI 49508. Telephone 949-5421

Office Hours: Monday, Wednesday, Friday 9-11 a.m.

After Office Hours - please call: 452-9519

Mailing Address: 4855 Starr Street, S.E., Grand Rapids, MI 49506

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Easter Meditation

Coming to the Empty Tomb

John Blankespoor

“Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, He is risen” (Luke 24:5,6)

• • •

Easter is a day of joy for the church. In history it soon became a feast day. Our Lord's resurrection was the beginning and basis of new joy, real joy — of a new life. It is a joy that can be found nowhere in the vicious circle of Ecclesiastes. It is the beginning of the whole new program God will work in the New Testament culminating in the renewal of all things, including a new heaven and earth.

Jesus Christ arose again. That is the message of the empty tomb. He is not here anymore, on this side of the grave. He conquered death, went through the grave, and arose with a new life. The people who had been raised by Christ came back to the same side of the grave, and had to die again. Jesus arose on the “other side” of the grave, with a new heavenly life. Never will things be the same again in His work and program. When sinners become born again, regenerated, they, too, become new, receiving of this resurrected life of Christ. This gives them a different attitude towards life, a new and different philosophy of life and also an entirely different attitude towards death. They have a hope that shall never be put to shame.

Even the angel servants of God join in this great celebration. How interested they had been in all of the work of God in the past. When He created the world by His almighty power, the angels rejoiced. They must have grieved over much of the Old Testament history of the church showing the effects of sin. They apparently knew something about the program our faithful covenant God would work out. Peter tells us that they watched it all with intense interest, not understanding it all, and wondering how it would all turn out (1 Peter 1:12). Of course, they were there with Jesus' birth, first one angel and then a host, and mortal men on earth heard a program of

these heavenly creatures as no one ever heard before.

(Wouldn't we like to have a recording of that choir?)

Later, angels sustained Jesus during His ministry. They strengthened Him in awful Gethsemane. Where were they when the Son was on the cross? We may assume that this, too, they watched with keen interest? During this crucial time Jesus might not have the support of any messengers from His Father. But at the resurrection, they appear again, the first to give the good news of the resurrection.

Angels will naturally also be in heaven. But there, even though they will still have a prominent place, they will retreat into “the background.” The saints will be **sitting** around the throne of Christ, while the angels will be **standing**, and so join in the heavenly music program. God's children, sons and daughters, are more important than servants. Those who are being served sit down, while those who serve stand to serve.

• • •

The empty tomb spoke loudly that Jesus had risen. First of all the big, heavy stone had been rolled away. The women knew that they couldn't do that. Surely the enemies of Christ would not have done it. Who then? John makes a special point of the fact that the angels in telling the women that Jesus was not there, but had been raised, pointed to the place where He lay. What does this mean? What would be special about seeing a bare flat rock where once the body of Jesus had lain? Likely this means that the strips of cloth that had been wrapped around the body and limbs of Jesus, were still in the same form they had been when wrapped around the body. There was the form of a body, but no body in it. And the head napkin in a place by itself, likely where the head had been. How could anybody in any way arise out of that form of the “bandages?”

Wouldn't we expect that these bandages when taken off had been laid or thrown on a pile somewhere in a corner, or on the place where the body had lain? But apparently they weren't lying that way. Only by a miracle can one be raised from the tomb with the bandages in that particular shape or form. That, too, the women and a few of the disciples saw. The empty tomb announced that Jesus was not there; He had risen. There stood the women with spices in their hands, wanting to anoint the dead body of Jesus, their beloved Master.

Consider these women standing with their spices before the tomb of the mighty risen Christ. Here are struggling, stumbling, children of God, in utter despair. They had expected so much from Him, they loved Him so dearly, but this was the end. What a disappointment! In deep sorrow and grief they stand at the dawn of the eternal day. But they don't know it.

We see all kinds of sadness at this empty tomb. Mary Magdalene is there sobbing and crying because someone has taken away the dead body of her Savior. Of the disciples, Judas Iscariot was no more. But what about the rest? Thomas was not even with the rest for a while. What's the use? It was all over; for what reason should the disciples continue together? We get a glimpse of the followers from the town of Emmaus. We know the history. One thing that troubled these men was that there were rumors that Jesus had risen from the grave. The two things that don't make sense to them are the crucifixion of Christ and now the rumors that He was alive. It was like a jig-saw puzzle where one big piece just didn't fit. That was Jesus' death on the cross and the rumors of Him being alive.

• • •

Why did all these people fail so badly on this great day?

The answer is given very plainly.

They were not living with or according to the Scriptures. That always causes problems, and lack of peace and comfort.

Hadn't Jesus told them repeatedly, and in great detail exactly what would happen to Him in these last days, that He would be captured, flogged, crucified, but also that after three days He would arise from the grave? He couldn't have made it any plainer.

But they apparently forgot all of this.

How the Lord chided and rebuked them for this unbelief. He even spoke of the disciples' hardness of heart.

Only by the Word can we, too, come to the knowledge and joy of the resurrection. Unbelief never comes to the resurrection. And man by himself doesn't either. The resurrection is not something that happens in this world, as something natural, or that can be seen or done by any man. It is a miracle of the Spirit, a work of God. The resurrection is something which no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor has ever arisen in the

heart of any man. Our God is the God of wonders.

God's Word reveals the things of the Spirit. Believing this Word, living by it, we come to know what it teaches, including the glorious resurrection from the dead and victory over the grave.

• • •

That Word gives us many accounts of Christ's appearances to prove that He arose. It gives us testimonies of witnesses that they saw Him, and even heard Him speak.

Luke tells us in Acts 1 that the Lord gave many infallible proofs of His resurrection. Paul tells us that Christ revealed Himself to over 500 people at one time. These people testified that they had actually seen Him. All this took place in our world. It is a part of history. I heard it said that the resurrection of Christ is better attested to than the life of George Washington in American history.

Clark H. Pinnock finds proof for the resurrection in the time when some of the New Testament books were written. He says: Paul's letters are firmly dated in the first decades after the death of Christ, and he refers to witnesses that he knew and talked with. Mark wrote his gospel a mere thirty years after Christ died; he designed it for Christians in Rome who were suffering under Nero's persecution. Thirty years is not a very long time. Imagine a person writing something today about the Second World War and dreaming up all kinds of events that never happened. He wouldn't get away with it, because there are too many around who can still remember those days as if they were yesterday. It is the same short period we are talking about in the case of Mark's and Paul's writings.

Because the Word tells us that He arose, and gives accounts of those who saw the risen Lord, we believe the testimony of the Word. "Faith comes from hearing and hearing comes from the Word of God," says Paul. If we fail to live by the Word, as the disciples did, we, too, will encounter all kinds of problems resulting in fear and insecurity.

In a certain hymn we sing: "You ask me how I know He lives." Then the answer in the hymn is: "He lives within my heart." It is true, of course, that the living Christ lives within the hearts of believers. But we do not know first of all that Jesus lives, because we feel that within our hearts. We know it first of all, because the Word tells us about it.

• • •

God calls us to believe His Word, in simple, child-like trust. Father, forgive our unbelief. And increase our faith through hearing that infallible Word that tells us again and again that Jesus lives today.

And make us by the Spirit new creatures, living children of God, who know that because He lives we, too, shall live.

Hallelujah, what a Savior!

Deaconesses?

Robert Grossman

The present discussion in conservative Reformed and Presbyterian circles about the possibility of opening the office of Deacon to women is even more significant than its immediate occasion. This is because how we answer this question shows how we view the Bible's teaching about the differing roles of men and women in the human economy. Involved in this, of course, is the basic hermeneutic question of the "cultural-relatedness" of Biblical teaching. Should we see the Bible's teaching as being modified in its application by the culture to and in which it was given, or should we see that teaching as requiring us to view and shape our culture according to God's Word?

This matter is important because the Bible's teaching of quite distinct roles for men and women is very clear and has been consistently followed in orthodox Christianity over most of its history. The real questions raised by the esteemed seminary professor B.B. Warfield's espousal of women deacons is, "Why has the orthodox Church historically rejected this idea so consistently?" It seems to me that the answer to this question is in the Biblical material on the subject, material which is too much being ignored in the present discussion. If we are going to change our practice, the least we can do as Reformed Christians is look at the evidence on which our fathers based their convictions. That they discussed the question, and that there were proponents then of a different position, makes this all the more reasonable and necessary. "Semper reformanda" ("always reforming") does not mean, "Everything is up for grabs!"

The Greek Word "Diakonos"

The Greek noun "diakonos" (as well as its related forms) is such a general word for "servant" or "minister" that using its application to Phoebe in Romans 16 as ground for either participation in the office of deacon by women or for a separate order of "deaconesses" is indeed slim — so slim as to be non-existent! Of the 103 times "diakonos" and its relatives appear in the New Testament, the King James translates them "deacon" only four times. Three of these are in I

Timothy 3 where the office very clearly is in view; the other is in Philippians 1:1 where the "saints . . . with the bishops and deacons" are addressed. A careful reading of the other 99 uses will show that these are the ONLY ones in which the office is clearly in view. Trying to plug the office into the others simply will not work in all but two or three of those others. Even in them it would be quite arbitrary. Therefore to force a technical and official meaning into a word that is used so generally of all kinds of Christian service throughout the New Testament could hardly be called "EX-egesis," even if the rest of Scripture contained no explanation at all of the general principles of male and female roles in God's economy or of the qualifications for the office of deacon.

The fact is that the office of deacon, as well as its qualifications and duties, rests on other ground than that of the use of the word "diakonos" in the New Testament. The office of deacon is so clearly based on the need perceived in the early Church for an AUTHORITATIVE distribution of alms to the needy widows that more comment on this purpose should not be necessary. That this need and the office established to fulfil it was a continuing one in the Church is clear both from Paul's reference to a "list" of widows in I Timothy 5 and from his giving of the qualifications for that office next to the qualifications for the eldership in I Timothy 3. It is specifically for this authoritative oversight of the alms of the Church that the OFFICE of deacon is established AND for which the qualifications in Acts 6 and I Timothy 3 are laid down. Interestingly, and very much to the point of this discussion, the GENDER of the deacons is mentioned prominently in both lists of qualifications.

Qualifications of Deacons

When we look honestly at the language of Acts 6 and I Timothy 3, it is obvious that being a man is one of the basic qualifications for the office of deacons. Non-official, non-authoritative deaconing is open to every believer regardless of sex or age. EVERY gift is to be used in the service ("deaconing") of other Christians, no matter in whom that gift resides. Indeed, when we realize

this latter point, it becomes perfectly obvious why the official deacons, whose office is next to and in partnership with that of the elders, would require qualifications which parallel those for the eldership. If these were not mentioned, it would be taken for granted that this is an office open to every Christian as a simple exercise of whatever gifts he or she possesses. However, since the official deacons DO exercise authority in the Church, they are required to be men in accordance with the principle of adult male headship discussed below.

If ever there was a time when it might be said (from the viewpoint of typical modern "wisdom") that female deacons had a place in the Church, it would have been in Acts 6. The problem was one of distribution to widows. Who could better oversee this with sensitivity and love than a group of women, or at least a group with women in it? But NO, the word is, "Brothers, chose from among yourselves seven MEN of honest report, full of the Holy Spirit. . ." The language is indisputably clear, "Brothers, chose . . . men." Why men? Because they are going to be appointed to be "over this business." They are going to be ruling officials in Christ's Church, at least over this business, and therefore they are to be men in order to carry out the Biblical order of authority.

I Timothy 3, at least as clearly, requires the same thing. Paul says, "Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife," (Vs. 12). One could not ask for a more simple and straightforward statement. Furthermore, the reason for this requirement is not long in coming. It is because those who rule well in their own families, where the husband is the head of the wife (or is that up for grabs too?), indicate thereby that they have one of the basic gifts for the office. That women deacons are simply precluded by this qualification is most clear. Those who would argue that this applies "only to male deacons and speaks not of female deacons" not only subtly slip into the camp of Bible interpreters who hold that anything not forbidden is allowed; they establish an office for which the Bible gives NO qualifications whatsoever while its qualifications for male deacons are very strict. It is not without reason that those who admit women to the deaconate soon find it inconvenient to bar them from the eldership.

Some would like to interject the possibility for "deaconesses" into this list by finding possible reference to them in the previous verse (see for example the footnote in the NIV). This is a rather sievelike conjecture. First of all, it would simply contradict the direct statement of verse 12. Secondly, in this one context where the word "diakonos" is obviously being used in a technical sense, the apostle avoids using it in reference to the women mentioned. The word used is "gunaikas" (meaning "women" or "wives"). It is the same word used for wife in the phrase "husband of one wife" in both verses 2 and 12 here in I Timothy 3. It is completely without

warrant to suggest, without the slightest hint from the apostle, that it might refer to anything but wives in verse 11, much less to female deacons.

The Principle of Male Headship

Of course, behind this requirement for male deacons stands the creation principle of the headship of the man. The New Testament is abundantly clear that this creation order is the basis and continuing standard for male and female roles in the human economy. Paul specifically applies this principle not only to the relationship of husbands and wives in marriage but also to the roles of men and women in general in the Church (I Corinthians 11:4-12; I Corinthians 14:34; I Timothy 2:11-13). The principle is simply that in every human situation of authority, the man is the head of the woman (I Corinthians 11:3). Why? "Because the man was not created for the woman, but the woman for the man" (I Corinthians 11:9, which is an obvious reference to Genesis 2:18). Therefore in situations of teaching (I Timothy 2:12, I Corinthians 14:34), worship (I Corinthians 11:4,5), office (I Timothy 3:2,12), marriage (Ephesians 5:24) and even in cases of a Christian women married to an unbeliever (I Peter 3:1), women are to be subject to men because in these situations authority is expressed. (See note below.)

We need to further understand that this is basically a positive requirement that women be in subjection and not just a negative requirement that they not rule over men. While the latter is certainly implied, it is the former that is the Biblical principle. This is seen already in Genesis not only in the creation of the woman as the "helper fitting" to the man but also in the curse upon Eve and her daughters concerning their relationship to their husbands. As Meredith Kline has pointed out, the best understanding of Genesis 3:16b would be, "and your desire will be to rule your husband, but he ought to rule over you." Eve willfully led her husband into sin, rather than actively submit herself to him (Cf. also I Timothy 2:14), therefore God declares that part of her corruption will be to chafe under the proper relationship to her husband. This same principle of active submission, rather than just the absence of assertion of authority over men, is at the heart of Paul's requirement of a covering, either of hair or headgear, for women praying or prophesying, while he forbids the same for men.

Of course, many modern Americans think of these teachings as fit perhaps for the Middle Ages at best and Neanderthal at worst. Nevertheless, I am convinced that light for the world comes from Scripture and not vice-versa. Indeed, at the heart

The Kalamazoo chapter of the Concerned CRC Members announce a public meeting April 2 at 8:00 P.M. at the Millwood C.R. Church with Rev. Henry Vander Kam speaking on the subject, "Why Be Concerned?"

of ALL Christianity is submission. The willing submission of Christ to the Father so beautifully described by the apostle Paul in Philippians 2 is neither foolish nor sinful, but is indeed the necessary work of the second Adam left undone by the first one. Christ is a man "UNDER authority" according to the man whose faith He commends the most highly while on earth. It is enough for the servant that he be AS his master; for us to chafe under the authority of state, church or home which God has placed over us is direct infidelity to our Savior Himself. Paul wants women to honor their husbands, "that the word of God be not blasphemed." Human authority is properly seen as the expression of God's own authority (Romans 13); thus we have the responsibility to be subject to that authority AND to operate it in accordance with HIS words. The sad thing today is that sincere Christians do not realize that God's requirements are FAR better than man's ideas. Real liberation for women (and men) is to be what God made them to be and to live out the roles GOD designed for them. Eve, seeking liberation for herself and her husband from God's rule, fell willing victim to the devil's lie, "Indeed has God said?" Man fell, not by telling a lie, but by believing one. God, who cannot lie, has said that women "must be in submission" (I Corinthians 11:34); do we REALLY believe that?

Hermeneutic Dishonesty

A great and common dishonesty in present day hermeneutics is the setting of one Scripture over another, coming up with an interpretation by which one contradicts the other, and then choosing which we will follow. Such is the methodology of those who look at those Scriptures quoted above and shrug the whole matter of submission off by saying, "Ah yes, but none of that can be true since the Scriptures also clearly say that there is neither male nor female in Christ." The fact is that there is absolutely no contradiction between Galatians 3:28 and any of the verses quoted above. First of all, Galatians 3:28 declares the "unity" of various kinds of Christians, not their "equality." Paul could very well have used the Greek word for equality here, but he simply doesn't. Second, equality of person in creation and of participation in salvation, which men and women do have, simply does NOT mean identity of role or calling — not within the Trinity and not among humans made in the image of the Trinity. There is no more contradiction between the woman being equal to the man in salvation and her being in submission to him than there is in woman being made equally in God's image with the man and yet being made as a helper fitting to him. Apples are not oranges, though both are equally fruit, and men cannot bear babies no matter how equal they are to women in the image of God and in salvation in Christ. Men and women have different offices in God's instructions for the

economy of this creation. To pretend otherwise is to fail to read either the Scriptures OR nature aright (cf I Corinthians 11:14,15). At the same time it is to be noted that the God-given authority structures of this world's economy do NOT hold in the new heaven and earth where "they neither marry nor are given in marriage."

Christians are called to be the salt of the earth and are to be careful not to allow the leaven of unrighteousness to penetrate the Church. The idea that there is something demeaning or unfair to women in the Biblical teaching of the headship of men is itself unrighteous and demeaning to both man and woman made in the image of God. Just as abortion does NOT give liberty to a woman but only makes her slave to another sin, so the idea of freeing the woman from the God-given authority order of this world demeans rather than liberates her. ALL humans ought to be servants of God, happy in the office HE has given them. The rise of this issue offers a tremendous opportunity for the Church to salt the earth with a "better way." "But if the salt has lost its flavor . . .," what do we have to offer? The fact that this issue of ordination is brought into the Church in imitation of the practices of the unbelieving world around us should itself alert us to be skeptical about it, for "that which is highly esteemed among men, is abomination in the sight of God."

NOTE: The REAL dignity and worth of the woman (as of the man) is that she is created in the image of God, not in some supposed governmental authority equal with that of men. The Bible's requirement for submission on the part of women is LIMITED specifically to the exercise of governmental authority. For example, a woman teaching in church is wrong, not because it is a sin for a man to learn something from a woman, but because in church teaching is to be done with authority under God. Other systems of thought, from Playboy to Islam, subtly or openly treat women as something less than equal to man in all truly essential respects. Thus it was in Israel, compared to the surrounding nations, that woman's dignity and worth was upheld and it is in BIBLICAL Christianity that the same is true in comparison to the competing philosophies and religions of today. If anyone is of the misconception that "women's liberation" has improved the dignity of women in our society, let them not forget WHO really suffers from easy divorce and the idea that home-making is not "fulfilling." This is to say nothing of the license for promiscuous sex and abortion that have come right along with it (yes, these are problems also WITHIN the church). Much of what we have seen since WW II in "women's rights" has NOT been progress. It is fitting that "You've come a long way baby!" appears on a cigarette ad.

Rev. Robert Grossman is a professor at Mid-America Reformed Seminary at Orange City, Iowa, and a minister in the Eureka Classis, Reformed Church in the U.S.

Machen and Van Til: Dissonance or Harmony?

Steve M. Schlissel

Pressing Toward The Mark is a collection of essays commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, edited by C.G. Dennison and Rick Gamble. The following is a synopsis of just one of the articles, hopefully providing you with a taste of the fine fare offered in the collection.

In an essay entitled "Machen, Van Til and the Apologetical Tradition of the OPC," Dr. Greg Bahnsen deals with the assumption made by many that the apologetical approaches of Cornelius Van Til and J. Gresham Machen were not compatible, perhaps even principally irreconcilable. Machen's approach was decidedly historical in nature, citing, expounding and explaining God's acts of history. Van Til, of course, deals with the philosophical pre-conditions of knowledge, asserting that the facts of history (for example) could not be meaningfully interpreted apart from Christian presuppositions.

Bahnsen relieves the supposed tension by approaching the issue from 3 different angles: 1) A historical review of the relationship between the two men, 2) An explanation, once again, of Van Til's actual position vis-a-vis the use of evidences in the apologetical task, and 3) An elucidation of Machen's own view of the value of evidence.

In the first place, through a roughly chronological account of the points of contact between the two great apologists, Dr. Bahnsen demonstrates that "Machen was hardly in the dark as to Van Til's point of view and method, and Van Til could not have been ignorant of Machen's." The value of this conclusion is seen when one remembers the enormous intellectual capacities of each (hence, it could not be argued that neither understood the other), the lack of any critical material produced by one about the position of the other, and, most of all, the eagerness with which they each sought association with the other to take their stand together against Christianity's enemies.

In the second place, Dr. Bahnsen had, once again, to refute the false "assumptions about Van Til's view of such tools as empirical evidence and theistic proofs in defending the faith." I can only trust that Bahnsen's brief survey of Van Til's actual position would put to rest the charges of fideism that are so often leveled against the beloved Professor. After all, how much plainer on this subject could one be than Van Til was when

he said, "Historical apologetics is ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY AND INDISPENSABLE to point out that Christ rose from the grave," etc.

The particular value of such evidences, however, was more fully discussed under the third head, Machen's own apologetic approach. There it was shown that their chief value is in a) encouraging the believer, and b) embarrassing the unbeliever. Dr. Bahnsen reveals how Machen parted company with Warfield just here. Warfield, having allowed for neutrality, unrealistically elevated the value of evidences. It is important to note, however that Dr. Bahnsen does not suggest that Dr. Machen ever fully shrugged off the influences of the Princeton approach. His thesis is not that Van Til and Machen used identical approaches or methodologies, but simply that there was no principal antithesis between them, and further, that when rightly understood, their distinctive approaches BOTH began with the Bible, with the SYSTEM of truth taught in the confessions, and with the understanding that "philosophical (presuppositional) apologetics forms the context within which the use of evidences is intelligible and forceful."

"The judgment is thus warranted . . . that the apologetic of Machen and that of Van Til do not stand diametrically opposed to each other, but rather, when taken in concert, sound a strong and harmonious trumpet call to arms in defense of the historic Christian faith."

Reformed apologetics, like the Reformed worldview, gives full value to all particulars (indeed, it alone can discover the full value of all aspects of life) because it has first come to know, enjoy and honor the God Who alone created, gives meaning to, and absolutely controls all of life and history. Evidences under God, the God of the Bible, are seen to have great value in serving His purposes. These purposes are defied if and whenever evidences are presented AS IF they could even possibly be correctly and meaningfully interpreted apart from Him.

Bahnsen's essay, being just one of thirty, makes this book a "must" for every Presbyterian or Reformed believer who'd like to sample some of the finest current American Presbyterian thinking.

(Rev. Steve M. Schlissel is the Pastor of Messiah's Christian Reformed Church, 2666 East 22nd St., Brooklyn, New York 11235.)

Two Reports on the Authority and Functions of Elders and Deacons

Peter DeJong

The 1984 CR Synod responded to a persistent feminist drive to open church offices to women with an attempt at compromise whereby churches were permitted to admit women to the office of deacon provided that when women serve as deacons their work "as deacons is to be distinguished from that of elders." Predictably, this political compromise satisfied few or none and created more problems than it solved, because in our churches' practice there has been and is increasing confusion of these offices. Therefore in 1985 another committee was appointed to "clarify for the church the authority and functions of elders and deacons." This committee is now submitting two reports to the churches.

The Majority: Evasion and More Confusion

A majority of seven begins by noting that "Elders represent Christ in the supervision and disciplining of the church; deacons represent Christ in the work of mercy; the council (all office-bearers) represent Christ in the general government of the church, primarily through coordination and administration" (p.2). It recalls that the 1965 Church Order formalized a widespread practice in the middle of this century of including deacons along with elders in the general government of the church. This, what had been a permitted exception, was now made a rule. This decision "tended to blend the offices" and to "erase their distinctions." The present committee (of which seminary president, James A. DeJong is chairman and church polity professor, Richard R. De Ridder is secretary) was appointed to clear up the confusion between elders and deacons, and consider the delegation of deacons to the assemblies of the church.

Summarizing its study of the office of elder, the committee lists elders' functions as "oversight of the doctrine and life of the congregation and fellow office-bearers, the exercise of admonition and discipline, the pastoral care of the congregation, and the participation in and support of both evangelism and defense of the faith" (p.6), asking the synod to adopt this summary.

Its study finds the role of deacons less clearly defined. It claims to observe already early in Reformed church history some indications that

"governing and pastoral functions were never overlooked as legitimate functions of the deacons" and that they might assist the elders when asked to do so (p.8), and sees that especially since 1965 the deacons' work has come to include "some tasks formerly done only by elders" (p.9). Although the basic work of deacons is to show Christ's mercy to those who are in need, the committee "judges that these shared responsibilities . . . do not violate the spiritual oversight and supervision assigned to elders alone" (p.10).

It ought to be noticed at this point that the many objections to the ordination of women as deacons because they then participate in the elder's function of church government, which the synod said must be prevented and which occasioned the appointment of this committee, are neatly sidestepped — and the women's share in church government — the whole objective of the feminist movement — is tacitly conceded, without the committee even intimating to the synod or to the church what it is really doing! Could this crucial decision have been slipped by more adroitly? (Only in the final proposed changes to the church order to implement the decisions (p.19) do we notice a recommendation "That the Supplement to Article 3, which states, 'The work of women as deacons is to be distinguished from that of elders [Acts of Synod 1984, p.655], be deleted.'")

On the flimsy basis that in Reformed church polity the diaconal work was never limited exclusively to the local fellowship of believers (Gal. 6:10), the committee recommends that the synod adopt the enormous change of defining the deacon's office "to represent and administer the mercy of Christ TO ALL MANKIND. . ."! (pp.10, 15; "for all persons, at home and abroad," p.17; emphasis mine). Citing the confusion of roles, the repeated agitation to have deacons delegated to broader church assemblies, the pragmatic arguments that the Canadian Council of our churches has introduced the practice, and that Classis Muskegon has attempted to do this irregularly, and that world relief work of deacons has expanded enormously, the committee argues for the delegation of deacons to the broader

church assemblies as "both necessary and advisable." Yet, instead of asking the synod to forthrightly approve this principle, it only recommends that the synod experiment with the practice of delegating deacons to classes to see how it works (pp.13)!

The Minority: Biblical and Confessional Correction

A minority report is presented by Rev. Nelson D. Kloosterman and endorsed (in its recommendation against deacon delegation to assemblies) by Mr. Henry Lane.

The author prefaces (and concludes) his discussion by stating his "conviction that the 1984 decision permitting women's ordination to ecclesiastical office is contrary to Scripture." He notes that inclusion of deacons with elders in "the general government of the church," allowed as an "exception" in small churches before 1965, in that year was made a "rule." The committee had split on its interpretation of the 1984 synod "stipulation that the work of women 'as deacons is to be distinguished from that of elders.'" The committee majority argued that this restriction did not properly apply to women deacons' share in the general government of the church as part of the consistory, but only to their particularly diaconal work. The minority shows that this majority "interpretation" makes the synod decision (which occasioned the appointment of this committee and its mandate) virtually meaningless, since deacons' work as deacons is already distinguished from that of elders (p.2)! The point at issue is whether the women deacons may share in governing the church as though they were elders! This crucial point the committee majority did not want to discuss, but simply to concede.

The minority report holds that the Bible does not approve of women deacons (How can women deacons meet the 1 Tim. 3:12 qualification of being "the husband of one wife?") If, however, the women deacons' work as deacons is to be distinguished from the governing office of elders, it suggests that this be done by removing all deacons from the governing consistories. (This follows the pattern of even conservative Presbyterians who have long had deaconesses, but did not have them or the deacons in governing sessions.)

Regarding the expansion of diaconal work, the question is raised "whether Scripture prescribes that deacons administer Christian mercy beyond the household of faith." This is not a question of whether believers should help unbelievers, but "whether this belongs to the official duties of the church." (The often quoted Gal. 6:10 about "doing good to all" is not addressed to this question, but to believers' practice among their neighbors, which does not require a special church office.) "In summary, the office of deacons" is to coordinate "the resources within the congregation, including (but not limited to)

the exercise of Christian mercy, . . . according to the example of Christ" (p.9). Special attention is called to Belgic Confession Article 30, which, outlining a government "according to the spiritual order that our Lord has taught us in his word," assigns the work of preserving true religion, maintaining true doctrine, and correcting and restraining evil men (persons) among the offices which constitute the council (p.9).

In dealing with the question of delegating deacons to broader assemblies, the minority report shows that the synod of 1965 introduced into our church order "a concept quite foreign to historic Reformed church polity" (Article 27-a). The novel concept that BROADER ASSEMBLIES EXERCISE CHRIST'S AUTHORITY ENTRUSTED TO THE CHURCH "is contradicted by both the history and the expositions of Reformed polity . . ." Van Dellen and Monsma in the 1972 Revised Church Order Commentary pointed out that "The local congregation is a complete manifestation of the body of Christ, a unit in itself, and is not to be looked upon as a sub-division of a large superchurch ruling with superior power" (p.112). The Dutch authority, Dr. H. Bouwman is quoted to the same effect as he explains that "All ecclesiastical authority given by Christ to his church resides in the local church" and that the authority of larger assemblies to make decisions is not in the office-bearers themselves but in their being authorized to act by and for their delegating churches. "In other words, the federation and its broader assemblies serve the congregation, rather than vice versa" (p.13). Because churches, not offices, are represented at broader assemblies, the "dignity and honor" of office is not involved in the question of delegating deacons to them (p. 15). The report points out that "representing the local church at broader assemblies is properly performed by those assigned the duties of supervision and rule" that is, the elders, not the deacons (p.16). It observes that "the principal focus of the diaconate's labors should remain the local congregation" — which does not require their delegation to broader assemblies (p.17).

The author restates his conviction that, although the 1984 decision can be implemented along these lines, its permission of women's ordination to church office is contrary to Scripture (p.18). The report proposed some appropriate church order changes to distinguish between the consistory of minister and elders, and the deacons and recommends that the synod "maintain the current practice of not delegating deacons to broader assemblies," since such government is not part of their assigned "assistance and service."

We Have to Choose

Confronted with these two reports, the church really must decide between opposite courses. The committee was ordered to clarify the confusion that arose when an earlier synod decided to approve ordaining women as deacons, provided that their work "as deacons . . . be distinguished

from that of elders." This confusion arose because deacons, as members of consistories, are more and more doing what is properly elders' work as they share in the rule of the churches. The committee majority tried to evade that issue, "judging" that there was really no conflict and finally recommending that the synod drop the church order provision that it was supposed to face. Its report instead of clarifying anything, simply recommends that the church proceed further into whatever direction it has been going. Although it approves only women's share in church government as deacons, the acceptance of its recommendations will be a sure ground for later argument that the church has thereby accepted the principle of women's rule in all offices. The committee recommendation is made as unobtrusively as possible, as it tries, in its words, "to advance and encourage the peace and unity of the Church." Its proposed unlimited expansion of the diaconate also forecasts further confusion in the churches' course. And its proposed timid experiment with deacon delegation to classes betrays more political compromise than Biblical direction.

What must we say of the minority's proposals? In an almost complete contrast, it tries to outline a return to Biblical and confessional definitions of and distinctions between the church offices. Yet, its suggestion that the work of deacons be more sharply differentiated and separated from the work of elders by removing the deacons from the governing consistories does not seem to have a compelling Biblical ground. While the Bible evidently distinguishes between the work of elders and deacons, it also seems to group them together in church leadership — See 1 Tim. 3 and Phil. 1:1 for examples. Kloosterman's own objection to the action of the synod in creating women deacons is more Biblically compelling. Removing all deacons from the governing consistory, while it would remove women deacons from sharing in the forbidden government of the churches (1 Tim. 2:12), would not satisfy the feminists who demand power and it would not satisfy those who seek a return to Biblical and confessional faithfulness in our church order and practice.

These two reports again face the denomination, its churches, and their members with a decision whether we will drift into further confusion, contradictions and conflicts in faith and practice or whether we will seek return to being Biblically and confessionally Reformed churches.

Dr. J.I. Packer in his magnificent little 1965 booklet, *God Speaks to Man* (later expanded in *God Has Spoken*), describes the condition of the "mass of churches" (p.11). "At no time, perhaps, since the Reformation have Protestant Christians as a body been so unsure, tentative and confused as to what they should believe and do. Certainty about the great issues of Christian faith and conduct is lacking all along the line. The outside observer sees us as staggering on from gimmick to

gimmick and stunt to stunt like so many drunks in a fog, not knowing at all where we are or which way we should be going. Preaching is hazy; heads are muddled; hearts fret; doubts drain our strength; uncertainty paralyzes action." These synod reports highlight the way this kind of confusion is multiplying in our church order and practice as we move toward the "mainstream" churches in what Packer describes as their "critical" abuse of the Bible. We, like many others, need to pray for and seek reformation by a return to the Bible, in church order and practice as well as faith. In this case we have to choose between a course of further confusion and frustration, and one of returning to the guidance of the Bible and the creeds.

—PDJ

Thank You!

In behalf of the Board of Reformed Fellowship, we extend a sincere expression of appreciation to those who have contributed so generously to Reformed Fellowship, Inc. (*The Outlook*) during the past few months. This has enabled us to meet our obligations, see a small surplus accumulate, and permit us to publish this 24-page issue of *The Outlook*.

The faithful support of our members and friends through the years, and presently, has made possible the 35 years of continuous publication of the magazine, and the fulfillment of its purpose "to give sharpened expression to the Reformed Faith, to stimulate the doctrinal sensitivities of those who profess this Faith, to promote the spiritual welfare and purity of the Christian Reformed Church particularly and also of other Reformed churches, and as far as possible to further the interests of all Christian action and institutions of Reformed character."

Our financial needs are ongoing, but so are the issues to be addressed, and the obligation to be involved in the defense of the faith. "For if the trumpet give an uncertain voice, who shall prepare himself for war?" 1 Cor. 14:8.

Continue to remember us in your petitions and with your gifts!

Edward J. Knott, Pres.

THE SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCES FOR SPECIAL CREATION

Lecture by widely known Dr. Duane T. Gish,
Vice-President of the Institute for Creation
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April 22, at 8:00 P.M. at Calvin College Fine
Arts Auditorium.

Sponsored by the Reformed Fellowship

Letter From An American Church Assembly

Noel Weeks

This year the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC) in the USA celebrated its fiftieth birthday. It took several days out of its regular assembly to look back in thanks and analysis over those fifty years. At the same assembly it debated whether it should go out of existence. Before the assembly was a proposal to be absorbed into the much larger Presbyterian Church in America (PCA). This would not be a normal church union in which negotiation between two churches produces compromises which hopefully retain the best points of each. The OPC would simply enter the PCA on the PCA's terms. The proposal required a two-thirds majority to pass. It obtained only 53%. Thus a majority were for the union but not a sufficient majority. Yet the inconclusive result of the vote has left the church divided and uncertain on its future direction. That uncertainty is likely to continue for the immediate future as the PCA has responded to the rejection by re-issuing the invitation for the OPC to join it.

The question to my mind, as a fraternal delegate of the Reformed Churches of Australia, was whether there was any relevance of this debate to Australia. I believe there are two issues behind the debate which parallel issues we struggle with.

Reformed or Evangelical?

The Presbyterian Church in America split when the nation split in the Civil War. A very strongly naturalistic and moralistic theology spread through the church late last century and early this century.

The earliest and worst inroads were in the northern church. Christians of many different convictions were united in opposition to this. Out of that opposition came the original Fundamentalist movement. It affirmed that the Bible was God's Word; that Jesus was really born of a virgin, performed miracles and rose from the dead. Those who denied such truths or wanted to shelter the deniers of such truths gained control of the Presbyterian church in the north. They first barred orthodox men from prominent positions at Princeton Seminary. Later they ruled that the officers of the church had to support the Foreign Mission Board of the church, even if that Board was sending out missionaries who denied the gospel. For refusal to support the Foreign Mission

Board, a number of men were removed from office as ministers and elders. They formed the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

So far the history has very little parallel with our experience in the Australian Reformed Churches. The points of contact come with what happened next. In the fight against liberalism in the Presbyterian Church the generals tended to be men of strong Reformed conviction. The troops however were often not Reformed. They commonly held to Dispensationalism and believed that a Christian should not drink alcoholic beverages. In other words, they were much closer to the broad stream of American evangelicalism or what we today call fundamentalism than to the Reformed faith.

The leadership of the new church had no uncertainty as to the direction it wanted to pursue. It sought for a strengthening of the Reformed element in the new seminary, Westminster, and in the new church. Hence it asked for help from the Christian Reformed Church. From that church to Westminster came R.B. Kuiper, N.B. Stonehouse, and, in particular, Cornelius Van Til. The most significant influence was to be Van Til.

This alignment with the Dutch tradition of Reformed scholarship was not universally welcome in the OPC. Twice the OPC was to split on the issue of identity. Was it to be a Reformed church, anchored in the Westminster Confession and Catechisms but cross-fertilized by the influence of Kuiper and Vos from the Dutch tradition? Or was it to be more a church of the American mainstream, evangelical but tolerant of Arminianism, Dispensationalism and Prohibition of alcohol? Those who wanted to move the OPC more into the mainstream were very clear on the influence they wanted to remove. It was the Dutch influence. Twice the OPC has chosen in those fifty years to be Reformed. The cost has been the departure of two groups who were closer to mainstream American evangelicalism.

The OPC has therefore had a sense of loneliness on the American scene. That loneliness has grown as its relationship to the Christian Reformed Church has become more distant. Partly that is a product of the Christian Reformed Church's

attempt to move more into the mainstream. With that has come less of an interest in the Kuyperian tradition of a distinctive Christian world view, especially as that tradition is represented by Van Til. Another factor is concern in the OPC about apostasy in the Netherlands and the influence of that sort of thinking on the Christian Reformed Church.

The new factor in the picture is the PCA. Liberalism in the southern Presbyterian church was not as pervasive as in the north. Hence when the eventual split came, the conservative church that resulted was much larger. That is the PCA. In addition, many churches of Presbyterian background from the north have joined it, rather than the OPC, which they see as being too strictly Reformed.

The PCA is also a mixed church. It has many strongly Reformed men. It has an element of Arminians, Dispensationalists and Masons. Its history has shown something of a movement in a more Reformed direction. Yet it has been without the polarization and division that has characterized OPC history. It is really far closer to the mainstream American tradition.

Hence the question: what should the future be for the OPC? Should it continue as an increasingly isolated Reformed church? Should it join with a much larger church that is closer to the American center?

May I suggest that there are parallels here with the crisis of identity facing the Reformed Churches of Australia. In the past the ethnic character of the church and the conviction of the superiority of the Dutch Reformed tradition to anything in Australia has largely ensured isolation. That is no longer the case. Are the Reformed Churches just another part of the mainstream of the Australian evangelical world or does their Reformed character set them apart? That question can no longer be decided by ethnic factors because the contemporary influence from the Netherlands would move the Australian Reformed Churches even beyond the evangelical mainstream into the camp of the Australian liberal churches. Indeed the Netherlands churches are now saying what the Australian liberals were saying twenty years ago.

We sense a strong affinity with the Australian evangelicals. They serve the same Lord as we do. That affinity has often been reflected in working together in Christian schools. Yet we must ask whether Australian evangelicalism is any less impoverished than when the Reformed Churches were first begun in this country. Nevertheless, as one speaker put it, who argued for joining the PCA, "It is kind of cold and lonely out here where we are. I would like some brethren to warm me up."

Perhaps one factor to be considered in this context is a paradox of Westminster Seminary and the OPC. Their international influences have probably been greater than their American influence. They have been members of the

Reformed Ecumenical Synod. In that Synod they have been prominent in urging a facing of the issues of apartheid in South Africa and theological apostasy in the Netherlands. Indeed a factor in this recent debate was the fact that joining the PCA would have ended the OPC's membership in the Reformed Ecumenical Synod. Thus they would not have been able to carry through to conclusion their concern that the RES place before the GKN the clear choice: return to your Reformed heritage or leave the RES.

The OPC and Westminster's influence in places like Korea is well known. The OPC has begun commendable steps to become a church of the ethnic minorities in America: the blacks, the Hispanics, etc., not by forming ethnic churches but by forming mixed churches.

The paradox of the OPC's ministry outside America and to the unassimilated within America is really no paradox. The closer a church is to the very centre of American culture; the more "American" it is; the harder it is for it to make an impact outside of America. The great advantage the OPC has had is the advantage of being a church isolated from the American mainstream not by ethnic factors but the theological conviction. If the OPC and the Reformed within the PCA can bring that dynamic to work on the PCA, then the PCA with its greater size and resources may be a blessing not just to America but to the world. If the Reformed distinctiveness is lost, then it will be a sad day for all.

And what of us in Australia? Do we know what we want to be? Dutch liberals, mainstream Australian evangelicals or Australian Reformed?

What is Good for General Motors . . .

We tend to think of America as the land where the businessman is king. Perhaps we should say it is the land where the organization man is king. Efficiency of organization is the secret of American business. That has also influenced the American church.

In this way also the OPC is rather unAmerican. It is a most inefficient church. The proposal to join the PCA was debated for two days with a total of 59 speeches. Out of it all came no clear resolution. That was true of several other issues discussed.

The PCA assembly runs quite differently. All matters are digested by a powerful committee before they come to the assembly floor. One has to be quickly to one's feet to prevent the recommendations of that committee being simply rubber-stamped. Indeed the recommendations are not even voted upon unless there is objection to them. Many of the delegates were not even at the assembly meeting proper. They were in committee meetings or informal caucuses elsewhere. It is efficient but . . . is it cricket?

Those who approve the PCA style argue that the rambling free debate of the OPC can only work with a small church. If the OPC ever wanted to be

big it would have to organize like the PCA. Inefficiency is a luxury only the small-time can engage in. Those who disapprove the PCA style warn that the church is in danger of being taken over by a few men. In such structures the full time denominational employees wield enormous power. One of the issues causing polarisation [SIC] in the Christian Reformed Church in North America is complaints against the denominational employees. It is complained that policy is increasingly being set by the denominational secretaries and their staffs rather than by the synod.

*. . . in the Christian Reformed Church
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Maybe we in Australia are too small to face such problems. Nevertheless there have been calls for the appointment of some sort of full-time missions administrator. As we grow we will probably have similar proposals. Let us consider the problems ahead of time.

Part of the advantage the full-time church executive has over the synod or assembly comes from the command he has over information, staff time and his own time. It stems also in part from the short-sightedness of many ministers and elders. They do not put time into wider and more long-range issues and leave that to the full-time church executives. Then in retrospect they complain that policies are being forced upon them from the top down by the administrative hierarchy which develops to fill the void.

Those who are favorable to a church effectively run by full-time executives have a counter. They argue that since the church will put its best men into such positions, there is no real problem-if they set the course for the church. The simplest answer to that is Jotham's parable about the trees in Judges 9. The point of the parable is that people who are successful and blessed in their present function are not attracted to ruling positions. Often denominations end up with the successful men on the mission field who would not leave their post being frustrated by office executives who set policy for a calling they themselves could not fill. Once a church is committed to executive leadership, it has to fill the positions whether suitable men are available or not.

There are several other problems which commonly accompany the executive approach. One is a priority of administrative concerns over doctrinal concerns. The old Presbyterian church which put out the founders of the OPC presented a paradox. It was sending out missionaries who denied that Jesus was the only Savior for lost mankind. It put out of the office those who would not support such missionaries. Yet that church

probably had a majority of people who would have regarded themselves as Evangelicals. The solution to the paradox lies in a certain mentality. It is the mentality which sees unity as the highest goal. A concern for doctrinal truth threatens that administrative unity. Hence the doctrinally orthodox are seen by the executive leadership as a threat.

Another problem is connected to this. If one avoids the time-wasting pursuit of detailed discussion one can end up with slogans. A tendency towards somewhat superficial slogans rather than thorough understanding flows from the business and advertising world into general American culture and then into the church.

Is there a solution? Do we have to choose for inefficiency rather than be controlled by bureaucrats? There are at least two N.T. passages which seem to bear on the question. Acts 6:1-6, the story of the choosing of seven to administer food distribution, shows a clear set of priorities. The ministry of the Word and prayer is the most important. That is confirmed by the order of the gifts in 1 Cor. 12:28. Teaching and exhorting gifts head the list and "administrations" is further down the list. These two passages show also another side of the question. "Administrations" is a gift of the Holy Spirit. The apostles selected out, according to Acts 6:3, men "full of the Spirit and of wisdom."

Part of the problem American churches are having with this question seems connected to a failure to relate the denominational executive to the Biblical structures. Is he an administrator chosen to relieve the ministry of the Word? If that is the case he still has to be full of the Spirit of God. How often do churches, just on a congregational level, have a problem of placing unspiritual but domineering men on boards of management? The damage is multiplied if it is done on a denominational level. Or is his ministry part of that ministry of the Word itself? To whom then does he minister? He becomes an effective bishop with all the problems that result. Thus we find tensions in Presbyterian and Reformed churches because they have full-time executives who play a role quite contrary to the theory of their church government.

*. . . we will be under pressure to
become a church on the model of
the American corporation with
denominational executives running
the board room.*

Can we avoid such problems as we grow? There seem to be two essential steps we need to take. One is to define clearly the role of any denominational employee as administrative assistance to the ministry of teaching and prayer. Another is for congregations and sessions to realize the need to encourage their ministers and elders to have wider interests and concerns than

the local congregation. Unless they do that and grant them the time to do it, we will be under pressure to become a church on the model of the American corporation with denominational executives running the board room.

Dr. Noel Weeks is a professor at the University of Sydney, Australia. He recently spent a half year in the U.S., where he was a fraternal delegate of the Reformed Churches of Australia at the Orthodox Presbyterian 50th anniversary General Assembly. His report is reprinted from the October, 1986 (Australian) Trowel and Sword, with which we have a reciprocal agreement.

"Creation"

Aaldert Mennega

Recently there seems to be a resurgence of interest in matters relating to the controversy over creation and evolution. In past discussions and publications it has been evident that the term "creation" has not always been used with the same meaning. At times "creation" referred to the things we see around us, and at other times to their initial appearance. Sometimes an author or speaker would even switch meanings inadvertently within a journal article or speech.

To avoid such a mix-up of concepts, some authors would capitalize one term and not the other. But others would disagree on which term should be capitalized.

One guest speaker at Dordt College was aware of this confusion and of the problems it can cause in an exchange of ideas. He therefore used the two terms "creatio" and "creatura" to distinguish between these two meanings of "creation."

In further discussions today we would do well to remember the distinction between these two concepts, which I wish to enlarge on at this time.

"Creatio"

First we will consider the term "creatio." When we talk about the "creation" of various things, such as the sun, or plants, or of man, for example, we are dealing with their initial appearance. This concept of "creation" refers to God's creative acts, through which He called into being that which did not exist before. God created by the Word of His Power. This is God's Word in creation.

When God created He made things and organisms to appear abruptly and supernaturally. Some He created *ex nihilo* (they simply appeared instantly, from nowhere), and others He created by an unprecedented, non-natural way from pre-existing matter.

It may be helpful to remind ourselves that this "creatio" is not subject to scientific investigation. God's creative acts are supernatural and do not

lend themselves to human experimentation or investigation, or to repetition. What we know about "creatio" we know only because God has revealed it to us in His inscripturated Word.

We must also understand that things which were created from pre-existing matter did not come about by natural ways but, again, supernaturally. Had they come about by natural law, then this would no longer fall within the realm of God's creating activity, but be in the realm of God's providence, of His upholding activity.

If God's creative acts were not supernatural, then the origin of things would be "natural" or mechanistic, totally dependent on the laws of nature. Were we to hold to this position we would have to call ourselves deists, because then God would at best enter only incidentally into the origin of the cosmos.

"Creatura"

Secondly, let us think about the "creatura." We often talk about "studying God's creation," and our intent then is to deal with the creatures which God initially called into being. Then we look intently at the products of God's creative acts.

These creaturely things, of course, are not "God's Word in creation." The "creatura" is not an infallible "book," as some have claimed, and it is not on par with Scripture. Although it is indeed a most elegant "book," it gives only a creaturely testimony. It testifies of God's eternal power and godhead, of His majesty and providence, and leaves man "without excuse" (Rom. 1:20). God's Word in Scripture speaks to us authoritatively, but the creatures can not do so because they have been affected by the Curse. The "creatura" speaks creaturely, testimonially, and is in principle different from Scripture which, says Calvin, "comes from the very mouth of God."

When we study the "creatura" we are observing its structure and behavior, and we discover some of the laws which God has laid down for it. These laws prescribe how the "creatura" must and will behave and they are part of its essence. The evidence we discover of these prescriptive laws we recognize as of God's daily upholding power, of His providence. Some of this evidence we are able to verbalize and make into statements about that behavior. Such statements, when accurate and time-tested, may become our "scientific laws."

In maintaining a clear distinction between these two meanings of the word "creation," i.e., of "creatio" and of "creatura," we are more likely to keep communications clear, and we are less likely to ascribe divine qualities to the creaturely things on the one hand, or, on the other hand to bring God's supernatural acts down to our twentieth-century understanding of how the universe operates.

Dr. Aaldert Mennega is a professor of Biology at Dordt College, Sioux Center, Iowa.

The CRC: Reformation or Transformation?

David A. Kloosterman

Reform and *transform* are words of which we Reformed are fond. They are the operative words in favorite slogans: "The church must constantly be reforming itself" and "the church must transform the world." These are good slogans, provided that they are properly, that is Biblically, understood. The difference which we see drawn in the Bible between the world and God's people is a radical one; a difference or division described by the word *enmity* (Gen. 3:15, Rom. 8:7, Ja. 4:4), and traversed only by words such as *conversion* (Matt. 13:15, 18:3, Acts 3:19, 28:27, Ja. 5:19), *rebirth* (Jn. 3:3, Gal. 4:29, 1 Peter 1:23), and *transformation* (Rom. 12:2).

Usually when we think of conversion or transformation, we think of them in a good sense: conversion or transformation *from* the worldly mind to the Christian mind. But it is also possible to speak of conversion or transformation in the opposite direction: *from* the Christian spirit to the worldly spirit. The Bible speaks of those who have "made a shipwreck of their faith" and of church's "candlesticks being removed." Therefore we may say that a formerly faithful church which becomes transformed (i.e. conformed to the world) is no longer a faithful church.

The church must be reformed, not transformed to be like the world. What does it mean to be a reformed (that is, a reforming) church? The best answer I can give in a nutshell is another slogan: "Committed to an inerrant Bible, a holy church, and a faithful witness in our time."

An Inerrant Bible

First of all, a reforming church is a church committed to an inerrant Bible. For how shall the church reform itself *according to God's Word* if it has a slippery grip on that Word? All real reformation in the church is rooted in a return to God's inerrant Word. As in King Josiah's day, a return to the Word of God brings a renewal of the covenant (see II Kings 23). A return to the word of God was also the root of the 16th century Reformation as evidenced by the slogan it produced of "*sola Scriptura*" — Scripture alone. Reformation means *back to the Bible* and *back to obeying it*, not drifting away from it in faith and

practice. And we in the CRC have drifted.

"But," the 'progressive' says, "we all believe the Bible is infallible in matters of faith and practice; why do you insist that a reformed church be committed to an inerrant Bible?"

First (and there really needn't be a second or third reason), that inerrancy is a *Biblical* doctrine has been demonstrated and maintained by many faithful theologians of past and present such as Warfield, Murray, Young, VanTil, Packer, L. Berkhof, Schaeffer, and Gerstner, to name but a few. Those who say that the Bible is infallible in matters of faith and practice but not in historical or factual matters have already given up a matter of faith which the Bible infallibly teaches.

Second, inerrancy has been the doctrine of the Christian church throughout the ages, including that of the 16th century reformers (see, for example, Lindsell's *Battle for the Bible* or Montgomery and Packer in *God's Inerrant Word*).

Third, history has shown that, as Lindsell states, "once biblical inerrancy is scrapped, it leads inevitably to the denials of biblical truths that are inextricably connected with faith and practice (*Battle for the Bible*, p. 139)." The United Presbyterian Church and the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland are but two examples.

Inerrancy, many have said, is a watershed issue. In changing one's position on inerrancy, one crosses a divide — on one side is found the church being reformed by God, on the other the church being transformed by the world. On what side of this great divide does the CRC stand? You say "Our Confession of Faith is clear when it says that 'nothing can be alleged' against the Scriptures and that we believe 'without any doubt all things contained therein'." I agree with you (and CRC Synods until at least 1959 agree with you). The Belgic Confession clearly holds to the inerrancy of Scripture; it sees no need for a careful definition of the nature of Biblical authority, as though one aspect of Scripture were authoritative and another aspect not — Scripture is authoritative. Period. But above the period an asterisk has, in effect, been placed and the footnote says: "*except for historical, factual, and

non-redemptive aspects — see Report 44 and the Contemporary Testimony.”

On issue after issue that faces the church we are told that the Scriptures are culturally-conditioned, unclear, or not binding for us today. It has been well said that Holy Scripture is being reduced to “apocryphal” status — we may read it with profit but not confirm any point of faith or of the Christian religion by it. A transformed church has only the words of men. A reformed church is a church committed to the inerrant Word of God.

A Holy Church

Although in King Josiah’s day the Word was rediscovered after cleaning the temple, most often these occur in the reverse order: when we truly hear and obey the Word of God, we are moved to clean God’s house. A commitment to an inerrant Bible brings a commitment to a holy church.

As I see it, to speak of the church reforming itself, or better, of God’s reforming His church, is to speak of the church’s sanctification. God’s church must pursue holiness — a holiness of corporate purity as well as piety. His church must constantly be pursuing reformation *according to His Word*. This it must do to remain the true church. If it does not actively work at corporate purity also in the area of theology and doctrine it will soon be transformed by the world into the world. “A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump” (1 Cor. 5:6 ff.).

Do we not confess that discipline is one of the marks of the true church (Belgic Conf. Art. 29)? And is not discipline also to be exercised in matters of doctrine? Do not all professing members of the CRC promise to submit to the church’s discipline if they become delinquent in doctrine as well as in life? Is not the whole point of our Form of Subscription, signed by every office-bearer, to preserve uniformity and purity of doctrine? Where is this type of discipline in the Christian Reformed Church when a Harry Boer writes a book rejecting the conclusions of the Synod of 1980 which upheld the doctrine of reprobation in the face of his gravamen? Where is this discipline when consistories and classes are not even allowed to question Calvin Seminary professors or Banner editors regarding their understanding of Genesis 1-11 or our confessions? Where is this type of discipline when, in violation of the “headship principle” which Synod has declared to be a Biblical teaching, Classis Grand Rapids East merely receives as information Eastern Avenue Church’s declaration that it has had and plans to continue having women preaching in worship services? When Bible lessons put out by the denominational Board of Publications do not recognize and in fact work against this Biblical teaching? Reformed Christians who take seriously their confession of being in duty bound to join themselves to the true church (Belgic Conf. Art. 28) look with grave concern for this mark of the true church in the CRC. Will we be reformed or will we be (are we in large measure already?)

transformed? A reformed church is committed to a holy church, a transformed church is not.

A Faithful Witness

Finally, only a holy church committed to God’s inerrant Word can be a faithful witness to the world. How can a church which is itself being rapidly transformed into something which is not the church reasonably hope to transform the world? “If the salt loses its savor it is henceforth good for nothing but to be cast forth and trodden under foot of men (Matt. 5:13).” In a church committed neither to God’s inerrant Word nor to maintaining a holy church in accordance with that Word, the salt of the earth quickly becomes the dust of the earth.

A church leadership that absorbs every new fad in the areas of theology and worship will soon be just as porous to the prevailing social and political views favored in secular academia. Does anyone really believe that the whole “headship” issue arises mostly from a new understanding of the Bible rather than mostly from the secular women’s liberation movement? Or that the impetus for understanding Genesis 1-11 as poetic myth rather than as history comes from the text of Scripture rather than from evolutionary presuppositions? In political matters too, our leaders take their cues from secular academia, in the light of secular liberalism, seeing the Bible as increasingly clear on such issues as Central American foreign policy, international trade, unilateral nuclear disarmament, Marxist liberation movements, divestment from South Africa, and the desirability of an expanded social welfare system, while the Bible becomes less and less clear on such matters as homosexuality, drunkenness, divorce, and abortion. Does this not turn upside down on which matters the Bible is and is not clear? Even a contributing editor of the *Reformed Journal* has been moved to point out that Calvin College is, to large degree, adopting the leftist political stance of secular academia (Aug., 1985 *Reformed Journal*). It seems our witness to the world more and more amounts to accommodation to, synthesis with, and even outright adoption of, secular liberal culture. But it is the world that needs to be converted and transformed, not the church!

The witness of the faithful church to a lost world is not first and foremost the social gospel which is emphasized today. As Bible smuggler Brother Andrew has pointed out, a mere social gospel, even if effective, will only enable people to go to Hell (we still believe in a Hell, don’t we?) with full bellies. No, a faithful testimony to the world is first and foremost the gospel of salvation from sin and Hell through faith in Christ’s atoning blood.

Yet a different brother Andrew would have us look not only to the GKN for leading in the area of the “social gospel” but in the area of the gospel of salvation as well. A recent Kuyvenhoven editorial would apparently have us learn more

about evangelizing the world from that nearly dead, heterodox church than from Billy Graham when it presents with approval Free University professor emeritus Dr. Johannes Verkuyl's criticisms of the Graham-organized evangelism conference called "Amsterdam '86." I quote: "In the Bible-study sessions he [Verkuyl] saw dangers of fundamentalism and biblicism. He thinks questions about the nature of biblical authority should be raised. The emphasis in evangelism, he says, should be on the love of God, and God's judgment should not be used as a threat. . . . When the good news is translated into the concrete terms of daily life [good news = good life? DAL], Verkuyl writes, more room should be left for particular cultural situations. . . ." (*The Banner*, Sept. 8, 1986; p.8).

Sad to say, the CRC leadership has already largely followed this advice. Another quote from this same editorial illustrates chillingly where this road leads: "One Reformed [Hervormd] journalist remarked that Graham talks much about conversion 'a word that has vanished from our churchly vocabulary. . . . The last time we heard that word it was said that we had to be converted 'unto the world.' After that a silence descended that no one has yet disturbed.'"

What shall it be for the CRC — a reformed church transforming the world, or a transformed church converted 'unto the world?' How long can we be halting between two opinions? The imperative command "Choose you this day whom you will serve" may soon come not only to the denomination as a whole, but also to classes, consistories, congregations, and families. At all levels we must be ready to answer in actions as well as in words: "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord!"

Mr. Kloosterman is an analytical chemist and a consistory member living at 3610 Konkle, Kalamazoo, MI 49001.

Who Am I?

Glenn P. Palmer

I am now a forgotten hero. No children are named after me, and nobody knows me — yet I was a very important official and everybody knew me. Surprisingly there are numerous references to me in the Bible.

My father was Jehoiada the priest, leader of the

family of Aaron, and he and I joined David at Hebron with 3,700 Levites — armed for battle, ready to deliver Saul's kingdom to David.

I was in charge of the Kerethites and Pelethites, (David's bodyguard). The reason I had such an important position was that I was a valiant fighter and I performed great exploits. I killed two of Moab's best men. On a snowy day I went into a pit and killed a lion. And I battled against a seven-and-a-half-foot tall Egyptian who had a spear like a weaver's rod and all I had was a club. But I snatched his spear from him and then killed him with his own spear. Because of these deeds, I was as famous as the three mighty men and was held in greater honor than the Thirty.

As the third army commander, I was in charge of 24,000 men who defended Israel during the third month.

My loyalty to David helped establish Solomon on his throne. When Adonijah tried to have himself anointed king, many of David's officials, Joab the commander-in-chief of the army and Abiathar the priest, for example, supported him. But my loyalty was so firm that the conspirators did not even dare to invite me. When told to support the anointing of King Solomon I said,

Amen! May the Lord, the God of my lord and king, so declare it. As the Lord was with my lord the king, so may he be with Solomon to make his throne even greater than the throne of my lord King David.

So Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet, the king's bodyguard and I placed Solomon on the king's mule, anointed him, and crushed the rebellion.

Later when Adonijah requested Abishag as his wife, King Solomon told me to kill him, and I did.

Out of fright Joab ran to the tent of the Lord and took hold of the horns of the altar. King Solomon ordered me to kill him, but when Joab refused to leave the tabernacle, I returned to the king to ask for further instructions. I was ordered to kill Joab in the tabernacle — I did so — and despite this-being against God's Word, I was not struck down.

I also killed Shimei on King Solomon's command.

I became the commander-in-chief of the army.

Lest you think that I was only a man of war, let me remind you that I was a priest, set apart to serve God. When the ark was brought into Zion for the first time, I was one of seven priests who blew the trumpet before. Later on Jahaziel and I blew trumpets regularly before the ark of covenant of God.

So there I am — a mighty warrior, perhaps the fourth best in Israel, chief of King David's bodyguard, a commander-in-chief of Solomon's army, and last but not least a priest. With all these hints you obviously know who I am.

II Samuel 8:18; I Kings 1-2; I Chronicles 11:22-25; 12:26-27; 27:5,34; 15:24

The Bearing of Scriptural Revelation on the Evolutionary World View

Johannes G. Vos

What is the Evolutionary World View?

A. It is a Non-Theistic Conception of Reality.

Classic evolutionism is essentially atheistic or pantheistic. This is not to say that all evolutionists are atheists or pantheists, or that no evolutionist sincerely professes the Christian Faith. People are very inconsistent and harbor the most incompatible ideas in their minds. But evolutionism as a self-consistent system of thought is inherently incompatible with Biblical Theism.

A popular writer on science has said that psychologists do not believe in God except on Sundays. This is not true of all psychologists, of course, but it is true of many. And the same could be said about the great majority of evolutionists. Indeed, it is difficult to avoid concluding that much of the appeal and popularity of evolutionary thought has been its seeming effectiveness in eliminating God from man's understanding of his world.

It is recorded that the entire first printing of Darwin's *Origin of Species* was sold on the day of publication. Darwin seemed to the public of his time to have found a way to explain living organisms without needing belief in God.

Gregor Mendel lived at the same time as Darwin, and published his epoch-making discoveries in the field of Genetics in 1865, six years after Darwin's book appeared. Unlike Darwin, Mendel was ignored by the scientific, scholarly and popular world of his time. Mendel was a Theist and a Christian believer, and his work has stood the test of time and research far better than Darwin's, but Darwin was applauded and Mendel was ignored. As a matter of fact Mendel's work, although duly published in a scientific journal at the time, was simply ignored — indeed, was virtually unknown — until 35 years later, when his principles were independently re-discovered by three other investigators.

Who can believe that pure zeal for scientific truth has been the chief motivating force which has made evolutionary thought the dominant world view today? A truer explanation may be suggested by Romans 1:28: "And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind. . ."

That the much-boasted zeal for pure truth is not the real or main motive which actuates

evolutionists is demonstrated by the way they act when someone dares to challenge the validity of the evolutionary scheme. In the science departments of university faculties it is considered virtually academic suicide to be known as a non-evolutionist. There are many biologists and other scientists who do not accept evolution, but nearly all of them, in the fields of biology and geology at any rate, are employed by the government or by private business corporations. So complete is the dominance of the evolutionary world view that it is often difficult for a non-evolutionist to obtain a position as a high school teacher of science. Academic freedom and tolerance are ideals which vanish when a scientific scholar is critical of evolution. Evolution is a **loaded** world view. It involves a built-in emotional and popularity appeal.

The late Samuel G. Craig in his book *Jesus of Yesterday and Today* raised the question of wherein the offense of the miraculous lies. In answering this question he wrote: "We are sure that the real offense of the miracle lies in the fact that it is an event that posits God as its only adequate explanation, and so an event that thrusts God, as it were, directly on the attention of men. It may seem strange, that men do not like to retain God in their knowledge. They do not object to admitting that God exists as long as it is confessed that He acts always and only through general laws; for in that case these 'general laws' stand between the individual and God and more or less effectively blunt their consciousness of God as a living reality to whom they are personally responsible. They do object, however, to admitting that God acts in a miraculous manner; and that because a miracle, being an event that posits the direct activity of God as its only adequate explanation, obtrudes God, directly and immediately, upon their attention" (p. 142).

The offense of the Biblical doctrine of Creation is of course equally real, and for precisely the same reason. Direct creationism explains origins in terms of acts of God, and this is deeply offensive to the sin-darkened and rebellious human mind. A scheme of things which purports to remove God from direct action in origins and to place Him far in the shadows of the background, or to eliminate Him entirely, is welcomed by the fallen human intellect as a relief from the intellectual and spiritual discomfort which direct facing of God causes. It was not without reason

that Adam and Eve "hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden" (Gen. 3:8).

B. It is an Irrational Conception of Reality.

Belief in the ultimacy of what men call "chance" is essentially irrational. It stands opposed to the view that the universe is rational because it is based on mind — the infinite, absolute mind of God. Evolutionistic science regards the term teleology as a sort of scientific blasphemy. A recent writer on the philosophy of science, Ernest Nagel, rejects traditional ideas of teleology and coolly informs us that any apparently teleological functions in nature can be re-formulated in terms of non-teleological explanations (*The Structure of Science*, pp. 402-3).

To hold that nature or the universe embodies a plan and manifests design or purpose implies, of course, that there must be a Planner, Designer or Purposer, and this can be no other than God. But this is regarded as a very objectionable concept from the scientific point of view, so teleology is dismissed as a pre-scientific concept, or re-defined in non-teleological terms. Any apparent design in nature is regarded as merely the fortunate result of chance. Martin Gardner in *The Ambidextrous Universe* says:

"Given a billion years of time, a chemical mixture as large as the earth's seas and atmosphere, and various energy sources more intense than today, and who can say that no self-replicating molecules can have formed fortuitously? For all we know they may have formed by the billions. . . In a few thousand million years (all of this is sheer guesswork) the primordial soup may have swarmed with these primitive, half-living organisms. The great epic of evolution would then have been under way" (pp. 152-3).¹

This same author says: "Evolution is simply the process by which chance (the random mutations) co-operates with natural law to create living forms better and better adapted to survive" (*The Ambidextrous Universe*, p. 145).

This author who frankly admits that what he is setting forth is "sheer guesswork," nevertheless lampoons the Biblical doctrine of direct creation by referring to it as "a series of stupendous magic tricks" (*ibid.*, p. 144).

One evolutionist has said that the chances were two billion to one against the original primal cells ever evolving to mankind, but the human race was amazingly lucky, so here we are!

The evolutionary world view holds that chance, not mind, is the ultimate basic principle of explanation. Belief in chance, I would repeat, is essentially irrational. To say that something is caused by chance is to say that it has no cause. Chance is the denial of a cause, it is the negation of all causation. It is the opposite of law, it is the enthronement of utter chaos. So nature becomes a book without an Author, a composition without a

Composer, a building without an Architect. It was not planned — it just happened.

Billions and billions of years of time, plus oceans and oceans of chance, are supposed to account adequately for the existence of such unfathomable examples of complexity as the human brain. Time plus chance equals organism, is the equation involved. A popular newspaper commentator recently dismissed some of the nonsense with the terse comment: "Go make a seed!"

C. It is an Immoral Conception of Reality.

It is no wonder that we face unprecedented moral evil today. The only real basis for any morality worthy of the name is belief in God. When God is removed from people's understanding of themselves and their world, they will inevitably lose their sense of moral responsibility, with the result that selfish, criminal and anti-social tendencies will reign unchecked.

Adolf Hitler was an enthusiastic evolutionist, and the horribly evil practices of German National Socialism under the Third Reich were theoretically grounded in evolutionary ideology which had, supposedly, cut the ground out from under the Biblical view of a moral law and Lawgiver. Let the fittest survive; let the defenseless and weak perish in concentration camps and gas chambers.

Here in America our public educational system, from kindergarten to university, is deliberately being made more and more rigidly secular. At the same time our sages and experts stand aghast at the boldness and increase of evil. These men pontifically tell us that mankind's moral or ethical sense has not kept pace in development with his technological achievements. Of course they never suggest a return to the God of the Bible and the moral absolutes of the Decalogue. Rather, the new religion of scientific research is supposed, by emphasis on the need for ethical development, to come up with the answers. Alas, it is a vain hope, and doomed to disillusionment and failure. When men have cut themselves off from the Source of all righteousness, they are certain to live in violence, selfishness and hatred.

Just because evolutionism is more than a biological theory — just because it is a comprehensive world view — its general and uncritical acceptance by the public, and the utter pervasiveness of its penetration through our educational system, from the university level down to the elementary grades, is bound to bring an increasing harvest of crime, lawlessness and moral evil of all kinds. There is nothing in this world view which can provide a corrective.

Our public educational system is in an intolerable predicament. Supposed to turn out a product which will be honest, law-abiding, mutually helpful citizens, the educational system is on the one hand rigidly prevented from inculcating the Biblical world view which is the

only real ground for morality, and on the other hand it is given over almost universally to the anti-theistic, idolatrous, man-centered false world view of evolutionism.

Public and private morality will never thrive again until the Biblical world view once again becomes dominant and the evolutionary world view is rejected for what it really is — a mere hypothesis, resting on unproved assumptions, which all too effectively removes God from a relevant place in people's thinking about the world and human society.

The evolutionary world view is no mere harmless technicality of academic biological theory. It is a comprehensive philosophy of life which is at the crucial points antithetic to the Biblical and Christian world view.

With God all things are possible, but it seems unlikely that the Christian believers of the world, divided and confused as they are, can in the foreseeable future reverse this all-but-universal trend of human thinking. Martin Gardner says: "Today it is hard to find a single biochemist or geologist, even among the most devoutly religious, who has the slightest doubt about the essential soundness of the theory of evolution" (*The Ambidextrous Universe*, pp. 144-5). In this state of affairs, it becomes our solemn duty to witness for the truth and against the dominant lie. And especially it becomes our duty to guard earnestly and jealously all Christian educational institutions lest the tares be planted while men sleep, and Christian education become hospitable to, and tolerant of, this anti-biblical system.

What is the Relation of Theistic Evolution to the Evolutionary World View?

Theistic evolution, as a matter of fact, is held by only a very small minority of evolutionistic scientists. It is a view held and promoted chiefly by religious scholars. Scientists and philosophers who accept evolution and at the same time profess belief in God are frequently found, upon closer examination of their positions, to hold a non-theistic view of God — either a Deistic or a Pantheistic view.

Theistic evolution is essentially a compromise view. It did not originate with the scientists, most of whom have little use for it. Classic evolutionary science came first, then afterwards came the attempt to adjust Christian belief to the evolutionary scheme of things. Religious scholars who have been impressed, not to say frightened, by the confident assertions of scientists about evolution being not a theory but "proved fact" have reacted to their embarrassment by the attempt to adjust their interpretation of Scripture to the evolutionary scheme.

Theistic evolutionism has been and is embarrassed by attempting adjustment of Christian belief to a scientific variable. Evolutionary thought has been and is fluid. It has moved from

phase to phase. Darwin, Lamarck, DeVries, Spencer — they have all had their day and been passed by. Christianity can be adjusted to such a scheme only with serious sacrifice and loss.

The common disjunction between the *Who* and *why?* and the *When* and *how?* of origins, as set forth by theistic evolutionists, is false and illusory. We are told that evolutionary science can tell us the "when" and the "how" of creation, or of origins, while only Scripture can reveal to us the "Who" and the "Why." This disjunctive formula is often presented in a very plausible manner. Yet it is basically misleading and false.

When we begin to speak of God's "method" or "how" in His work of creation, we have already assumed that it was not really a work of creation at all. When we say "method" or "how" we say process. By any sound definition of creation it is not a process but an act and does not involve the use of methods or means. "By faith we understand the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear" (Hebrews 11:3). Like miracle, creation is an act of God's direct supernatural power. It is an act of omnipotence. It is an event with no cause except the will of God. "For he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast" (Psalm 33:9). Shall we interpret this last text as really meaning, "For he spake, and a chain reaction began which ultimately produced what we see in nature today" . . . ?

The tendency to speak of God's method of creation betrays an unconscious but real denial of the reality of creation — it reduces all creation to the category of a providential process. Creation means God's act of producing the truly new — new as to matter, new as to form, or new as to both form and matter. God used dust to create Adam's body, but the creative act did not involve process. It was an act of the divine will, a "fiat." Some philosopher once said, "What is mind? No matter. What is matter? Never mind." In like vein we may truly say, "What is creation? No process. What is process? Never creation."

(To be concluded next month)

1 This and the following quotations are used by permission from The Ambidextrous Universe, by Martin Gardner, Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, New York, 1964.

This material is reprinted from the December 1966 issue of Torch and Trumpet (as our periodical was then called), after it had been presented at the previous annual meeting of the Reformed Fellowship. Rev. Johannes G. Vos was a veteran missionary and minister in the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Professor at Geneva College in Beaver Falls, PA, editor of Blue Banner Faith and Life and editor of the works of his father, Princeton Professor of Biblical Theology, Gerhardus Vos. Johannes Vos' address to the Reformed Fellowship meeting of the previous year entitled, "Surrender to Evolution: Inevitable or Inexcusable," had appeared in the February, 1966 issue of this magazine and several thousand reprints had been distributed. His writings on the subject are as timely today, when evolution is still aggressively promoted in spite of the collapse of evidence for it, as they were twenty years ago.

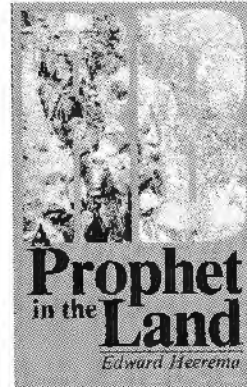
Christian Unity

One of the most interesting and often encouraging aspects of the routine of producing a paper such as ours is the continuing contact which it provides with fellow Christians in many parts of the world whose concerns are essentially the same as our own. It sometimes recalls comparable experiences in overseas military service which often taught us lessons on what we mean when we confess, "I believe a holy catholic church, the communion of saints."

Our regular readers will have noticed from time to time reprints from other publications. The *Outlook* has exchange arrangements with perhaps three dozen other periodicals; with some of these we have reciprocal agreements to reprint with merely a credit line. Some of our most illuminating articles come in this way. Our own articles are often similarly reprinted. Recently I noted Rev. J. Blankespoor's Easter meditation in the British Calvinistic Baptists' *Reformation Today* and, in the (also British) *Banner of Truth*, Rev. John Piersma's translation of a chapter in an old Dutch book. When Lester De Koster's series on "Bureaucracy in the Church" began, its first article appeared almost immediately in the *Lutheran Christian News* (so that it may have had three times as many Lutheran readers as we have subscribers). Bureaucracy is a major threat to every church and those articles were as applicable to their churches as to ours. The conservative Mennonite publication, *Guidelines for Today* reprinted and circulates Laurie Vanden Heuvel's booklet *Women in Church Office*, and its latest

issue highlights our book review, "The Battle for the Bible in Foreign Missions". These observations stress the fact, repeatedly noted by *Guidelines'* able editor, Sanford G. Shetler, that despite our church differences, there is far more real unity between those who love the Lord and His Word than there is within our church fellowships between those who try to be faithful to that Word and those who attack that Word with their unbelieving criticism. We must together work and pray for ecumenical movements that are united by love for God's Word while we reject movements that compromise and try to destroy it.

PDJ



R.B. A Prophet in the Land

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This is a special offer available to Fellowship members and new subscribers to *The Outlook*. Retail price \$7.95 U.S.; \$8.95 Canadian (Paideia Press).

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A LOOK AT BOOKS

NETHERLANDERS IN AMERICA, by Jacob Van Hinte. Robert P. Swierenga, General Editor, Adrian de Wit, Chief Translator. Baker Book House, 1985. Hard cover, 1157 pp. Review by the editor.

To anyone interested in tracing the beginnings and early history of our Dutch settlements in the U.S., this massive, handsome book is uniquely interesting. When I first saw it, I expected it to be a new edition of the 1955 book by Henry S. Lucas which had the same title and covered the same subject. Instead, this new publication is a translation of a Dutch work which appeared in 1928, *Nederlanders in Amerika*. Regarding the relationship between the two works, Dr. Lucas, in his Foreword explained (p.xi) that while his book covered the same ground as can

Van Hinte's, it was "conceived in a very different spirit. My account is that of one brought up in the Dutch settlements of America, of one personally acquainted with some of the pioneers themselves and with some of the communities," while "Van Hinte's home was in the Netherlands and he had spent only a few weeks in America." Accordingly, Lucas felt that he had covered the history of the settlements in greater detail. Since the Lucas book is out of print, this publication of Van Hinte's gives us a unique access to much of this fascinating early history. The book contains an amazing amount of detail, reflecting a life-time interest of its Dutch author. Even random reading reveals that there are occasional, sometimes amusing errors. Anyone who has driven the rather spectacular mountain roads into Yosemite National Park will be amazed to learn that there was an irrigation

canal "dug through the famed Yosemite Valley, creating the no less famed Yosemite Lake" (p.641)! And the settlement at Shepherd, near Billings, Montana is moved some 180 miles to the vicinity of Great Falls (p. 696; perhaps the measure of that error is reduced to the extent that the map reduced the 600 mile length of that state to about 90 miles)! Such an occasional slip, however, should not minimize the interest or value of the book.

The author shows his enthusiasm for the virtues of the Dutch, but also favors their rapid Americanization. He also reveals a rather consistent prejudice against the churches who seceded, attributing their action to cultural more than to religious reasons. Despite this prejudice, this is by far the most extensive record of the beginnings of our church settlements and the book would be a desirable addition to libraries.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

RES and the Pope's Vigil

At the invitation of the Rev. Peter De Jong, editor of *The Outlook*, I am submitting this statement. The following is my answer to the article entitled "The RES and the Pope's Vigil," which appeared in the February issue of *The Outlook*.

When my husband received an invitation to participate in the World Day of Prayer in October, he determined that the RES should not be represented in Assisi. He would not be able to attend, but neither did he want me to represent the RES there. In fact, he wrote a letter to that effect to Dr. Pierre Dnprey of the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity at the Vatican, stating that I would like to attend but "in propria persona."

Quite unexpectedly in November a representative from the Grand Rapids Press called and asked me for an interview concerning the World Day of Prayer. He wanted it immediately and on the telephone because he had a deadline to meet. The Press representative, unintentionally, I am sure, misquoted me and put words in my mouth that I did not express in that fashion. For example, I quoted Shakespeare as saying, "More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of." I did not mention St. Paul or say that more things are wrought by prayer than anything else.

The article in *The Outlook* stated "sordidly syncretistic affair." The Pope and his committees (including evangelical Protestants) emphasized that there was to be no syncretism in the services. Let me quote from the introductory speech of Cardinal Roger Etchegaray, President of the Pontifical Commission for Justice and Peace, delivered on the Day of Prayer. "We are here together without any trace of syncretism." Near the close of the program the Pope gave a speech in which he made it very clear that the only way to God is through our Saviour, Jesus Christ. He gave a distinctly Christian message to all who were present.

Of course I believe that the only prayer that is acceptable to God is through Jesus. I, personally, would not have invited all the non-Christian

religions to participate. I was merely explaining in the telephone conversation why the Pope invited them. I did not join in prayer with adherents of other faiths. I did join in prayer, Scripture reading, and singing during the long service that the Christians held by themselves.

As far as finances are concerned, although I have represented Paul in four different foreign countries, the RES has never paid a dollar for my transportation costs. I pay for those myself. No money of the RES was spent on my trip to Assisi.

The idea of preaching is farthest from my mind. What the Rev. Knodel suggests might have been "preaching on her husband's behalf" at the meeting of the Secretaries of the Christian World Communions consisted of reading a report, written by my husband, about the activities of the RES during the previous year. I also explained some of our publications and answered questions about the RES.

What is regrettable is that the Rev. Knodel and those who took it over in *The Outlook* give no indication of being cognizant of the deadly danger facing the world in this nuclear age. It was the awareness of this threat of a global catastrophe that moved the Vatican to call for prayer.

I am amazed that not one of all the Christian business men, ministers, lawyers or whatever who comprise the Board of Trustees of *The Outlook* displayed the courtesy of calling me before they voted to publish this article, written by a minister who seems to have taken for unquestioned truth every word written in an article appearing in a daily newspaper. I hope I have allayed the fears and removed the insinuating suspicions that were expressed in the article by the Rev. Knodel.

Sincerely,

Bernice Schrottenboer

P.S. If the readers of your magazine wish to learn what my husband's views on non-Christian religions are, they should read the RES Mission Bulletin or "Inter-religious Dialogue." And if they are concerned about his attitude toward Roman Catholics, they should ask for a copy of the pamphlet, "A Contemporary Evangelical Perspective on Roman Catholicism." Both are available from the RES Secretariat, 1677 Gentian Dr., SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49508.

Dear Peter,

I would like to respond, however briefly, to Mrs. Bernice Schrottenboer, along the following lines. I don't agree that either the Grand Rapids Press or we erred in our essential characterization of her involvement. I have no doubt that Mrs. Schrottenboer wishes our error. But if anything, her response confirms our charges.

After dispensing with all the incidentals of the case, her dual defense is that this prayer convocation was not syncretistic, and was certainly justified (here by the threat of nuclear war). Your readers must evaluate just these issues.

What is her evidence that association at a prayer convocation with Dali Lamas, archbishops and popes (of various kinds) is not syncretistic? Well, as you can plainly see, she quotes the Roman Pope. It's not syncretistic because the pontiff's party early on, said it wasn't. This is the baldest kind of hypocrisy. In order for its acceptance, one must give up the simplest forms of honesty and truth. On the face of it, it's preposterous.

Then she justifies everyone's Assisi convocation involvement with the threat of nuclear war. Nuclear war, in this case, sanitizes syncretism (which in this case was really raw polytheism) of its sin. It looms over us with such awful heaviness that we all ought to get together and pray.

Now think of this. If the threat of nuclear war justifies such things, what about the threat of Divine Judgment? This latter dwarfs the former by comparison! On this line of reasoning, syncretism should have been orthodoxy's main agenda ever since the beginning. But the apostle, along with all the previous faithful declared, "What has Christ to do with Belial?"

Yet this is the kind of reasoning emanating from the household of the secretary of the RES! And we are supposed to feel sorry for holding it up to the light of day.

I just can't buy it. In an earlier era, if Luther were faced with such events and their justifications, he would have referenced their practitioners by some lower part of the animal kingdom, and written them off as being hopelessly deluded. Calvin would have banned them from Geneva. And the Reformers' company, however haltingly, *Journey* would like to represent today.

In the Lamb,

R.E. Knodel (Editor)