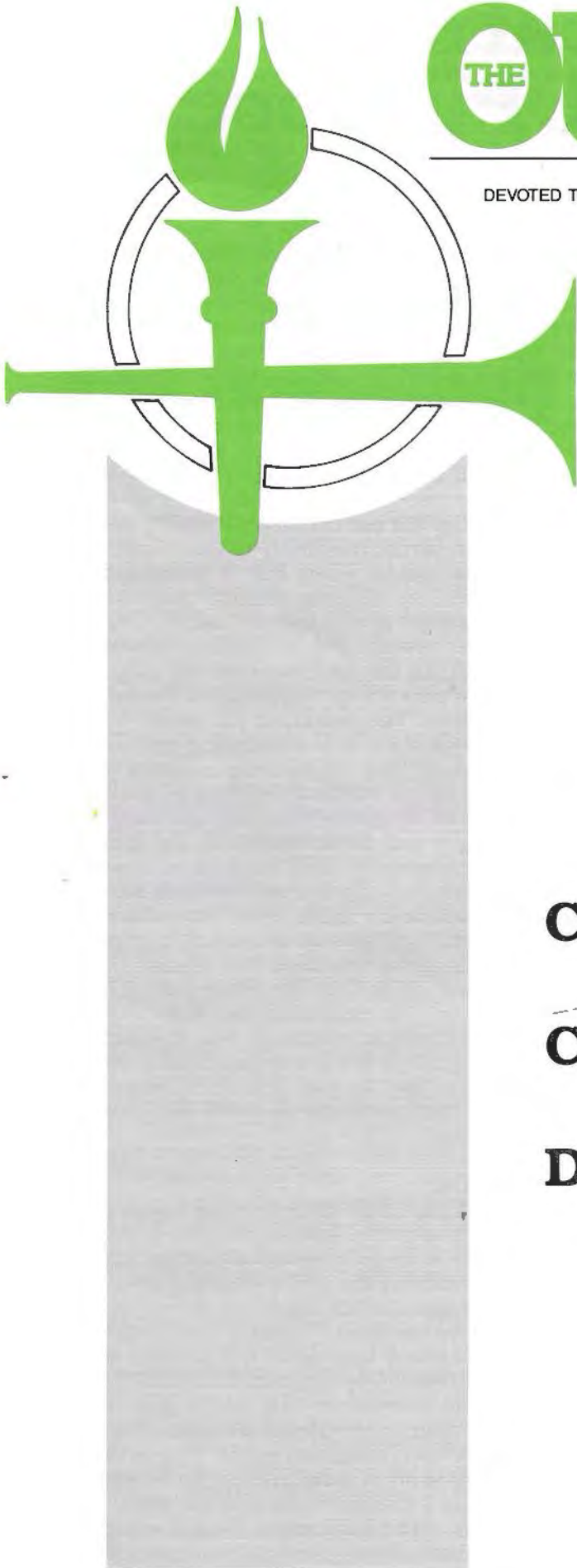


THE OUTLOOK

DEVOTED TO THE EXPOSITION AND DEFENSE OF THE REFORMED FAITH

JUNE 1987



Christian Education

CRC Synod Agenda

Dr. Cornelius Van Til

Christian Education: Its Reason and Purpose

Henry B. Vanden Heuvel

Psalm 78, Like many other Old Testament passages, is an account of God's dealings with his people Israel. In the early part of the Psalm, the author states what his object is. This Psalm provides a beautiful incentive for Christian education. He speaks of the reason and the purpose of educating our children. God's covenant of grace and His kingdom are the two great "pillars" upon which Christian education rests. These two "pillars" need to be seen in our Christian Schools to the extent that our Christian Schools embody the reason and purpose suggested by the Psalmist; to that extent they are the kind of schools that Christian parents desire for their children.

THE COVENANT

The first pillar of Christian education is the covenant of grace. This is suggested in the opening verses of Psalm 78. We read, "O my people, hear my teaching; listen to the words of my mouth. I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter things hidden from of old—things we have heard and know, things our fathers have told us. We will not hide them from their children; we will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord, his power, and the wonders he has done." The reason for the kind of education that the author of Psalm 78 is talking about is the covenant that God made with His people. This covenant claims the children as first of all belonging to God. God is addressing His people when He says, "O my people." The people are God's people, and their children are also God's children. They are entrusted to parents in order that the parents may instruct them in the ways of God. The basis for this instruction is the covenant which God established with His people, in which He promised to be their God and the God of their children.

Because God claims us and our children as His people, He calls us to respond as people who belong to Him. Part of this response is seen in the instruction we give to our children. That instruction must show this covenantal relationship that exists between God and us. This instruction must indicate our firm belief that children of God-fearing parents are different from children of unbelieving parents, not as naturally better, but as claimed by God, called to believe in and obey Him. Children of Christian parents are God's children. He wants them to be treated and trained as His children. This determines the kind of education they are to receive. Because children of Godly parents are God's children, they must be

taught that they are to be different from children of unbelievers, and warned not to turn away from God as their fathers had done (vv. 8 ff.). This is the teaching of Scripture. In I Corinthians 7:14 Paul argues that children are set apart for God through the believing parents, even if only one of the parents is a Christian. He says, "For the unbelieving husband has been sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife has been sanctified through her believing husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy." They are not children belonging to the state; they are part of the family of God. Only in an educational system where this is recognized and valued will the children of Godly parents be treated and trained as children of God.

The state, of course, does not treat its children like that at all. To the state, children are simply a commodity, a resource to be developed for the good of the state. The reason for education, according to the state, is to prepare the children to serve the state. The children are resources to be cultivated in such a way that they can be good citizens. It is an altogether pragmatic business. No Christian can or may be satisfied with that kind of educational philosophy. How much more wonderful is the concept of covenantal Christian education which sees God's claims upon our children as His children, and calls us as parents to bring them up to recognize this basic and crucial distinction that marks them as children of their heavenly Father. The first thing then that distinguishes Christian education from the state-controlled education is the way the child is seen. The children in the Christian school are covenant children and must be taught in a way that clearly reflects this fact.

THE KINGDOM

The second important thing that the author of Psalm 78 says about the education of the children is the purpose to be achieved by education. He writes, "We will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord, his power, and the wonders he has done." What is the purpose of Christian education? In a word, it is to teach the "kingdom of God." The kingdom of God is the entire universe, everywhere that God reigns. And of course He reigns and rules everywhere. His Name is upon everything that exists. This is the great teaching of all of Scripture, as can be easily seen even from a cursory reading of the Bible. Psalm 99 says, "The Lord reigns, let the nations tremble; let them praise your great and awesome

Name—he is holy.” And Psalm 103:19 says, “The Lord has established his throne in heaven, and his kingdom rules over all.”

It is the kingdom of God that sets the agenda for Christian education. Everything that is taught in the Christian school is to be taught from the perspective that God’s Name is upon it. His kingdom rules over all. To say then that such disciplines as mathematics, and sciences such as astronomy, physics, and chemistry, are not any different in a Christian school than in a state-controlled school is to deny the crucial teaching of all of Scripture regarding God’s claim upon all of life. Indeed, one of the reasons we as a Christian community insist on Christian higher education is to guarantee that the persons who teach our children in the local Christian schools will have the proper kingdom perspective that pervades all of the Scriptures. One must certainly hope and pray that this perspective will continue to be impressed upon our future Christian school teachers in all our Christian colleges.

That this kingdom perspective is indeed the basis for what is taught in the Christian schools can be seen from the content of education according to Psalm 78:4. The Psalmist says, “We will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord, his power, and the wonders he has done.” Certainly those deeds of the Lord include the subject matter of the Christian classroom. The subjects that are taught concern everything in the universe, all of which are included in the “praiseworthy deeds of the Lord, his power, and the wonders he has done.” All of the universe is the object of education. The Christian school must teach God’s kingly claim upon all of life.

There is a striking illustration of this in Genesis 18, which is the account of God speaking to Abraham just before the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. In Genesis 18:17-19 the Lord speaks of His decision to tell Abraham what He is about to do to the cities of the plain. The reason He tells Abraham, is that the patriarch will then instruct his children what has happened to those wicked cities. God wants Abraham to know that what is about to take place is the result of God’s judgment. The generations to come must never be allowed to say that these events simply happened. The children to come must never be taught that history is merely the random acts of men and nations with no clear purpose behind them. The children must be taught that God is the One who controls all that happens in the world, in order that they may “keep the way of the LORD, to do righteousness and justice that the LORD may bring” upon them and their succeeding families the covenant blessings that had been promised, rather than the judgments Abraham, the “father of believers,” would see destroying Sodom and Gomorrah. This is the “covenant” and “kingdom” perspective that must control our Christian education of our children.

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THE OUTLOOK

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“And the three companies blew the trumpets . . . and held THE TORCHES in their left hands, and THE TRUMPETS in their right hands . . . and they cried, The sword of Jehovah and of Gideon” (Judges 7:20).

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Christian Schooling: Is It Worth While?

David B. Cummings

In 1933 Dr. J. Gresham Machen addressed the National Union of Christian Schools with the following words of commendation and benediction for the example of the teachers and supporters of Christian day schools. "Some of you, no doubt, are serving as teacher on salaries necessarily small. What words can I possibly find to celebrate the heroism and unselfishness of such service? Others of you are maintaining the schools by your gifts, in the midst of many burdens and despite the present poverty and the distress. When I think of such true Christian heroism as yours, I count everything that I ever tried to do in my life to be pitifully unworthy. I can only say that I stand in your presence as in the presence of brethren to whom God has given richly of His grace. You deserve the gratitude of your country. In time of spiritual intellectual and political decadence, you have given us in America something that is truly healthy. . . . like a precious salt that may check the ravages of decay. May that salt never lose its savor! May the distinctiveness of your Christian schools never be lost; may it never give place, by a false 'Americanization,' to a drab uniformity which is the most un-American thing that could possibly be conceived! But if you deserve the gratitude of every American patriot, how much more do you deserve the gratitude of Christian men and women! You have set an example for the whole Christian world; you have done a thing which has elsewhere been neglected, and the neglect of which is everywhere bringing disaster. You are like a city set on a hill; and may that city never be hid! May the example of your Christian schools be heeded everywhere in the Church! Above all, may our God richly bless you, and of His grace give you a reward with which all the rewards of earth are not for one moment worthy to be compared."

How can we reverse the spiritual decline in America? How can we hope to see our covenant youth as a body growing to serve the Lord? Along with the church and Christian home we need Christian schools whose teachers will unite instruction of subject matter with teaching of character, and who in their personal lives will join teaching of truth with godly example so that the power of the godly examples in history and of their own lives might be unleashed before us.

I. HUMANISM ASKS TEACHERS TO TEACH VALUES WITHOUT REQUIRING MORALITY

- A. John Dewey and Jean Piaget have fostered a destructive attitude toward the spiritual

and moral development of our children. For 50 years they have urged upon the state schools a view of children based upon Darwin's theory of evolution that children are good and evolving to better. Their views are still the basic diet in child psychology and elementary education classes in many colleges.

They believed that we must let the child's nature fulfill its own destiny. God and God's Word are not to be introduced as goals or moral standards for their learning, but are false and external stimuli which interfere with the pupil's learning and with the child's adaptation to his environment. We must not impose any moral rights and wrongs on them, but simply spur on their interests, and supply their needs and wants. Intellectual and moral reasoning power cannot be developed from outside influences, but only from within the child.

- B. These Views of Dewey and Piaget form the basis for the "Values Clarification" methodology which permeates modern government-controlled education. The standard text used to inculcate prospective teachers with this methodology (*Values and Teaching* by Raths, Harmin, and Simon) argues that teachers should not try to "impose values" on students; they should try to "flush out" or clarify students' own value systems. They should "be concerned with the process of valuing and not particularly with the product." So, for instance, sex and contraception are to be discussed, researched, and illustrated, but no standards for the proper use of sex are disclosed. Is it any wonder that we face an unprecedented rise in teenage fornication, pregnancy, and abortion? To give information on sex without moral standards is to give a stimulation to sexual drives not different from pornography.

The general assumption of the "Values Clarification" methodology, whether the classroom is health, literature, or history, is that each student should develop a standard that is right for him or her. As C.S. Lewis notes ironically in the *Abolition of Man*, "We continue to clamor for those very qualities we are rendering impossible. . . . We make men without chests and expect of them virtue and enterprise. We

laugh at honor and are shocked to find traitors in our midst. We castrate and bid the geldings be fruitful." We tell our students there are no moral values, and then tell them to be motivated, pure, upright, non-violent, and respectful.

Throwing more money at the problems of our state-controlled schools is not the solution. As the cost per child has gone up, the problems have gotten worse. Not only are there no moral standards for children, but neither are there standards for the teachers.

II. OUR CHILDREN NEED THE POWER OF GODLY EXAMPLES.

A. We need for our children, Christian teachers who in their own lives will combine knowledge with moral character. The cry of many a teacher in government schools today is the same as that of the politician who has been caught in some moral scandal, "My private life does not have anything to do with my professional performance." This is simply the unbelieving idea of Greek philosophy dressed in modern Levis. The Scriptures say that any such disjunction between mind and body, intellect and lifestyle, classroom and private life, tears apart the nature and personality of man. We are each one person, a physio-spiritual unity. We are to love the Lord with all our heart, soul, strength, and MIND. Our Lord Jesus, as Moses before Him, spoke to us the Truth that sanctifies, and also set for us an example of humility, meekness, and servanthood. Paul urges us to be imitators of him as he also was of Christ. This is what our children need. Teachers who imitate the heroes of the faith: instructors who inculcate by their words and actions the power of a godly example. We want no disjunction between private and public life for the teachers of our youth. As the elders of the church are to have a good reputation outside the church and in their homes, may our teachers have the same. As the teachers in the church are to be examples for the flock of God, so may the teachers be to our covenant lambs. Let people who set a good example in their own home or neighborhood lead our nation, guide our churches, and especially be set before our children as teachers in our Christian schools.

B. Not only do we want teachers who by God's grace will silently stand before our children as godly examples; we want teachers who will help our children find in history such examples. The protestant reformation pioneered the study of history as a valuable tool to trace spiritual corruption and to recover authentic Christian ex-

ample. History was not a part of the curriculum before Luther's time. Today our Christian schools are helping to revive this concern of Martin Luther. The modern trend has displaced history from the curriculum, in favor of civics, media studies, social studies, and life problems courses. In the Christian school we teach history to help the children understand the works of God. It is His-Story. But it is also the account of men's lives lived in either obedience or disobedience to God, which the student must learn to criticize in the light of God's Word. In history we learn from observing acts of God's mercy, longsuffering, wrath and justice. We also have in the men and women of history examples of good that should be emulated, and examples of pride that should be abhorred.

The exciting task of the teacher in Christian School is to put back together the morality, spiritual beliefs, and intellectual accomplishments of significant figures of history.

We cannot understand Bach's music apart from his signing each piece "Soli Deo Gloria."

We cannot understand Karl Marx apart from his immorality with his maid and the suicide of two of his three daughters.

We cannot understand the scientific discoveries of Louis Pasteur apart from his personal relationship to the Lord. Once an assistant found Louis Pasteur bent reverently over his microscope. The assistant later told Pasteur that it looked as if he had been praying, to which Pasteur replied, he was indeed praying to adore his Creator for the beauty of his creation that he was beholding under the microscope.

We begin to understand the many stages of the writer Arthur Koestler when now we know how he ended—in a suicide pact with his wife.

We cannot explain the convictions of Abraham Lincoln apart from his life-long desire to be molded by the Holy Scriptures. We can only understand the deep melancholy of his life when we see him as a man who most of his years was a skeptical believer in God, who had not yet trusted in Jesus for his own salvation. He wrote to a friend. "When I came to Springfield I was not a Christian; when I left Springfield for Washington and asked you to pray for me I was not a Christian; when I received the bitterest blow of my life, the death of my son, I was not a Christian; when I went to Gettysburg I was not a Christian, but there at Gettysburg I consecrated my heart to Christ." When he stated that "this nation under God shall have a new birth," he had himself just

been born anew. At Gettysburg the great emancipator was himself emancipated. His heart was changed, and he now loved the Savior. "With malice toward none, with charity for all, . . . may we bind up the nations wounds. . . ." These words of his second inaugural were the words of a man who knew the forgiveness of God.

The Christian teacher will examine how personal values affect ideas, how beliefs affect both private morality and public contributions. Biography is reunited with the entire academic spectrum. There is great power for good as our teachers place before the student their own godly examples, and the examples of God's blessings upon the righteous since the beginning of the world.

And if you have any doubt that God will powerfully bless such godly examples in these evil days, look at God's blessing upon a faithful father amidst similarly evil days in Israel.

III. IN THE DAYS OF KING JOSIAH GOD BLESSED THE GODLY EXAMPLE OF SHAPHAN.

Shaphan was one of Josiah's highest ranking cabinet members—his scribe, or secretary of state. He helped administer Josiah's reforms, his tearing down of idols, and his repairing of the temple. It was Shaphan who boldly read from the rediscovered book of the law the judgments of God due the king and the king's people. Shaphan did not shrink from declaring the soul-piercing truth, and through this God brought about the king's repentance and renewed zeal, resulting in God's extended mercy to Josiah and his throne.

But the days of Josiah were only a brief respite in Israel's persistent march to doom. What would happen to Shaphan's sons and grandsons? His son Ahikam, who served with him alongside of Josiah, also later served in the court of wicked Jehoiakim. When the mob cried out for a death sentence for Jeremiah "the hand of Ahikam, son of Shaphan was with Jeremiah so that he was not given into the hands of the people to put him to death." When identifying himself as a friend of Jeremiah could well put his own life in danger, Ahikam courageously protected the prophet of truth. Nor was the power of the example of father and grandfather lost on Ahikam's son, Gedaliah. When Jeremiah's life was threatened a second time, the Babylonian king entrusted Jeremiah into the hands of Gedaliah. When God said to Israel, "Don't run to Egypt, but serve the king of Babylon," many disobeyed and migrated to Egypt. But not Gedaliah—he trusted the seemingly strange word of the Lord. His intellect was captive to the Lord. He stayed in the land of Palestine. He was made governor by the

Babylonian king, and the poor of the land were entrusted into his care.

But what about Ahikam's wayward brother? He had none. Elasah and Gemariah were as faithful as he. And Gemariah's son Micaiah was as true as grandpa Shaphan. Gemariah and Micaiah also served as officials in the court of Jehoiakim. It was Micaiah who was in the temple and heard Jeremiah's servant Baruch read the prophet's word from God. It was Micaiah whose heart was stirred with faith and excitement. Immediately he went to his dad and the other cabinet members. He recited from memory the words that had struck his soul. It was this report that moved his father and the other officials to have the prophet's scroll read before the king. This was an urgent word that the king must hear! The king sat at his fire warming himself. As they began to read the scroll to the king, he took his knife and began to cut it into shreds and toss it into the fire. Gemariah cried out bravely, "No, don't burn the scroll!" He and his son faithfully blew the trumpet in warning, though the king did not heed. They were innocent of the king's blood, and had faithfully held aloft the banner of light in the days when the darkness settled on the kingdom.

The same power for living as godly examples is with us today. "The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting to those that fear him, and his righteousness is to children's children—to such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them." The God of Shaphan is our God, and He will still bless our godly example for the preservation of a faithful offspring on the earth. This is what God will bless so that our children will follow in their father's footsteps unto the thousandth generation, instead of the sons falling away in the second generation, and our grandchildren going to the devil in the third.

We live in evil days. Christian parents are afraid to conceive and raise children in the face of the rising tide of decadence around us. We see many covenant children turning away from the Lord. Many homes feel fortunate and comforted if one child in five love the Savior. What is needed is the power of godly examples. We need the godly example of you who are members of the church family, of you who are grandparents, and of you who are parents. And we need the godly Christian example of those with whom our children will have spent at least 16,380 hours by the time they are 17 years old—their school teachers.

Rev. David B. Cummings is the pastor of the Faith Presbyterian Church (OPC) at Elmer, NJ, and the editor of two good books on Christian education THE PURPOSE OF A CHRISTIAN SCHOOL (1979) and THE BASICS FOR A CHRISTIAN SCHOOL (1982). The PURPOSE book is available from the publisher, Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., P.O. Box 817, Phillipsburg, NJ 08865 for \$4.50.

Dr. Cornelius Van Til

Dr. Cornelius Van Til, for 43 years professor of apologetics at Westminster Theological Seminary and emeritus professor there since his retirement in 1972, died at the age of 91 on April 17, 1987.

Van Til was born on May 3, 1895, in Grootegast, The Netherlands. He was the sixth son of Ite and Klazina Van Til, who emigrated to the United States when "Kees," as he was known to friends, was 10. He grew up helping on the family farm in Highland, Indiana. He went on to receive an advanced education when he saw the need to meet unbelief on its own ground and in the most thorough terms. Years later he said, "Study was not easy for me. Having grown up on the farm I was used to weeding onions, carrots and cabbages. It was hard to adjust to classroom work; I had labored physically and my body was aching for that." He was married to Rena Klooster in 1925 and they had one son, Earl, who died in 1983. Van Til is survived by a grand-daughter, Sharon Reed of Valencia, PA.

He was graduated from Calvin College (A.B., 1922), Princeton Theological Seminary (Th.B., 1924; Th.M., 1925) and Princeton University (Ph.D. 1927). He served as the pastor of the Christian Reformed Church in Spring Lake, MI, 1927-28 and was instructor of apologetics at Princeton Theological Seminary, 1928-29. He was professor of apologetics at Westminster, 1929-72.

He was a minister in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church from 1936 until his death.

Van Til's published writings include *The New Modernism* (Presbyterian and Reformed, 1946), *The Defense of the Faith* (Presbyterian and Reformed, 1955) and *Christianity and Barthianism* (Presbyterian and Reformed, 1962), plus several syllabi and numerous reviews and articles. He was joint editor of *Philosophia Reformata*, a quarterly devoted to Calvinistic philosophy. A festschrift, *Jerusalem and Athens*, edited by E.R. Geehan, was published on his 75th birthday (P&R, 1971).

He is perhaps best known for the development of a fresh approach to the task of defending the faith. Although trained in traditional methods he drew on the insights of fellow Calvinistic philosophers Vollenhoven and Dooyeweerd to for-

mulate a more consistently Christian methodology. His apologetic focused on the role of presuppositions, and point of contact between believers and unbelievers, and the antithesis between Christian and non-Christian worldviews.

In an interview with *Christianity Today* (December 30, 1977) he said, "...there are two ways of defending the faith. One of these begins from man as self-sufficient and works up to God, while the other begins from the triune God of the Scriptures and relates all things to him. . . . The traditional ideas of trying to find some neutral, common ground on which the believer and unbeliever can stand are based on the notion that man is autonomous. . . . [yet] Paul says, all men, knowing God, hold down this knowledge in unrighteousness. . . . [This knowledge] is the only basis man has on which he can stand, to know himself, to find the facts of his world and learn how to relate them to one another. Without the Creator-God-Redeemer of Scripture the universe would resemble an infinite number of beads with no holes in any of them, yet which must all be strung by an infinitely long string."

One of Van Til's students, T. Grady Spires, now professor of philosophy at Gordon College, Wenham MA, says of him, "Every student of Van Til can instantly recall the characteristic Van Tillian blackboard graffiti: the foremost symbols being two circles, a big one for the creator, the other for creation with no ontological bridge between. The entire history of philosophy or Christian thought, including most heresy, would be strewn in names and phrases across the board. . . . The consumption of chalk and the whirl of ideas were symptomatic of an excitement generated not from brilliant erudition, though some of his skyrocketing digressions could be called that, but from the strong and systematic emphasis on the antithesis between a biblical world and life view and the several intellectual scientific versions of the carnal mind. Students began to see how far-reaching were the differences between believer and non-believer." (*Christianity Today*, 12/30/77)

Editor's note: His way of defending our Christian faith is shown especially clearly and simply in the little booklet, WHY I BELIEVE IN GOD.

Home Missions' "Special Concern"

Steve M. Schlissel

"Some years ago a young man presented himself to a presbytery for ordination. As he was known to believe that the boards and agencies of that church were infiltrated with modernism, he was asked whether he would support the boards and agencies. He replied that he would support them insofar as they were true to the Bible. The answer did not please presbytery, and he was asked if he would support the boards regardless of what they did. When the young man declined to make any such blind promise, the presbytery refused to ordain him" (Gordon Clark, *What Do Presbyterians Believe*, p. 191).

The struggle to define exactly what it is that unites a denomination is not new. Is it a common mission, a shared ethnic heritage, geographical proximity, the Apostle's Creed? It has been the distinctive of that portion of the Master's field called (truly) Reformed that the TRUTH of God as revealed in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments is the alone adequate foundation for unity. To serve that end, the creeds and confessions, which summarize in systematic and succinct form the teachings of Holy Writ, were drawn up and handed down to succeeding generations. We reformed have been sanctified, set apart, by God's TRUTH, His Word that IS truth.

Having taken that for our starting point, the Christian Reformed Church has been greatly blessed by our Sovereign. We have grown from 900 members to that many churches in 130 years. We have been pioneers on several mission fronts, have led the way in Christian education, built colleges and a seminary, produced radio and television programs that bring the gospel around the world daily, published magazines, journals, books and curricula. But we have begun to succumb to the temptation to find our unity in these endeavors, rather than in the truth upon which they were founded.

This is evident when one observes which "trespasses" are forgivable and which create an uproar in our denomination. When evolution is taught at Calvin College (though in a "baptized" form), that's academic freedom. When a minister tampers with the doctrine of election, that's ac-

cepted. When a local church notifies its classis that it will be ordaining women into office contrary to church order, that is the leading of the spirit (-Aye. An unclean spirit. SMS). But when a pastor from Brooklyn addresses the annual meeting of the Reformed Fellowship in Grand Rapids and suggests that agencies which refuse to be accountable to local consistories in matters of TRUTH and practice, have their quota withheld, THAT IS A CAUSE FOR SERIOUS CONCERN!

In a letter to me from Regional Home Missionary Ronald Peterson, it was indicated that the summary of my talk (*For Such A Time As This*), which appeared in the December, 1986 *Outlook*, merited an investigation into my views. "My views of what?" you may ask. Of Scripture? No. Of Articles in our Confession, or questions and answers in our catechism, or heads of doctrine from the Canons of Dordt? In other words, for suspected deviation from our Forms of Unity? No, no, no, no. "The reason for the concern of our staff and Executive Committee, which I share, has to do with comments presumably made that at least sound adversarial, inflammatory, and divisive toward the denomination and denominational agencies."

In keeping with this concern, raised by the delegate to Home Missions from Classis Lake Erie, an inquiry was to be made regarding "Home Missions' support of and sponsorship of Messiah's Congregation. The Classis has also addressed a letter to the Board, which will be considered at our Board meeting in the context of your church's new funding request."

Hmmmm. "Considered in the context of your funding request." I wonder what that means? That I was upset by this blatant attempt at bureaucratic bullying is (perhaps too) evident from my letter of reply, reprinted here:

Ronald L. Peterson
123 Buena Vista
Hawthorne, NJ 07506
Dear Ronald,

I am in receipt of your letter of concern dated February 5th. What's all the fuss about? Am I being challenged as to my orthodoxy, my align-

ment with our doctrinal standards? Have I deviated from the church order? Please tell me, exactly what standard is it feared that I have violated?

I am enclosing a (poor, I'm afraid) cassette copy of the address I gave at the annual meeting of the Reformed Fellowship in October of 1986. That should serve to provide you with more context for the statements which the Reverend De Jong summarized in the December Outlook. . . .

My views have been aired publicly and privately, in the pulpit and in print, on the floor of Classis and Synod. . . . My views were known to Classis Hudson as far back as my examination for licensure in 1984! I stand firmly (I trust) on the Word of God and the traditional understanding of that Word as summarized in our forms of unity. I think that people who espouse positions which deviate significantly from these standards ought to a) repent, or b) find another denominational home. That is exactly what is called for, it seems to me, in the form of subscription which we all signed, and in the church order.

Now let me ask you for more information. In a lively discussion which we had a month or two ago, you used the following phrase: "It all depends on what you mean by 'inspiration'." Will you please tell me, in writing what you mean by it?

It is apparent to me and all of us in Messiah's Congregation that there is substantial interest in our ministry around the denomination. This interest is not "in spite of" our concern about trends in the denomination, but often especially because of it. We get letters from around the country, many including loving gestures of support. We can accept the money we've applied for, should the board decide to grant it, with a crystal-clear conscience because we truly and with utter sincerity believe that we are doing our very best to represent and further the cause of the historic Christian Reformed Church.

Surely those who "raise these concerns" are not trying to use Home Missions' funding as a weapon to silence discussion of contemporary issues in the church?! If Messiah's' application is denied, we're certain it would be because of financial constraints, and not a punishment for "bad boys" who speak their minds. Right? I know the many people who follow the progress of our ministry will be interested in the board's decision.

Yours and His,
Steven M. Schlissel

P.S. If you require any further information, please indicate what you'd like to know when you respond to my request for your definition of the inspiration of Scripture.

Well, friends, as it turns out, at the Home Mission Board meeting in February our request for a decreasing, three year Grant-In-Aid for 20, 16, and 12,000 dollars was disapproved, and we were given a one time grant of \$6,000 with the emphatic specification that no money is committed

to us for the future. Hmmm.

Of course, not being privy to the motives of the heart, one may only cautiously speculate as to whether there is a connection between the "concerns" of the Board and their decision. Be that as it may, WE ought to be concerned that what does seem to get action, and quick action, is the kind of things that were mentioned in the speech at the Reformed Fellowship. Was this a "We'll show you who'll cut off whose funds" machination? I don't know. I do know that God Almighty will supply the needs of this little ministry according to the counsel of His good and glorious will. I also know that it is high time for us to recall exactly what it is that binds us together, for when boards and agencies stand in conflict with what we confess to be the truth, something's GOT to give. When push comes to shove, one is likely to be sacrificed on the altar of the other. Shall Truth govern the activities of our agencies, or shall our agencies take it upon themselves to redefine the Truth.

(Incidentally, I have yet to receive an explication of our RHM's understanding of inspiration, though he told me in a phone conversation that he'd be happy to provide it. I'm anxious to know how one reconciles the advocacy of ordaining women as ministers with our confession which states that "it is unlawful for any one, though an apostle, to teach otherwise than we are now taught in the Holy Scriptures: nay, though it were an angel from heaven, as the apostle Paul says. For since it is forbidden to add unto or take away anything from the Word of God, it does thereby evidently appear that the doctrine thereof is most perfect and complete in all respects. . . . Therefore we reject with all our hearts whatsoever does not agree with this infallible rule" (Belgic Confession, Article VII). This "infallible rule" tells the church in 1 Timothy 2:12,13 "I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent. For Adam was formed first, then Eve." Christian Reformed ministers solemnly swear that they believe "without any doubt all things contained in" the Holy Scriptures. "All things" may not become simply "many." This same infallible rule tells us, "Prove the spirits, whether they are of God. Likewise: If anyone cometh unto you, and bringeth not this teaching, receive him not into your house" (See Confession, VII). That there are many in "our house" that do not bring this teaching (in an undiluted form, that is) is painfully apparent. Yet these men had sworn "diligently to teach and faithfully to defend the aforesaid doctrine, without either directly or indirectly contradicting the same" (Form of Subscription). I think our agency officials should assure us that the agenda they are promoting is the infallible and inspired one of the Scriptures as understood in our Confession, and not another.)

Another, more flamboyant minister, felt compelled to tell me of his response to my speech after listening to the cassette tape. He was "greatly offended," he said in a letter dated March

30th. He called me a vicious, outright liar and "the sterling example of a terrorist who incites others to wave their financial guns in the face of our denominational agencies." I am not greatly offended. By Brooklyn standards, those are not cutting words. I am deeply concerned. What ought a consistory do when it finds certain agencies and boards impervious to the pleadings of those they represent? What should the good folk of the Christian Reformed Church do when they discover they are financing private relativistic agendas, and not the sound, confessional programming they thought they were supporting. Has the primary authority of the Church of Jesus Christ now been moved to boards and agencies, or does it still reside under God in the consistories?

No. I must reiterate and reaffirm those statements singled out by Mr. Peterson in his letter as "of special concern" to the Home Missions Board:

"The speaker called for much more vigorous protest against what is happening to the denomination. . . ."

"He urged the need of . . . ,if official blasphemy makes it necessary, picketing the denominational building."

"No answers, no bucks."

Brothers and sisters, this is no more divisive to our denomination than an aspirin is divisive to a headache. Removing disease makes one MORE, not less, whole. It is only being suggested that consistories learn a lesson from our bureaucrats: we must consider what our boards and agencies say and do "in the context of" THEIR "funding request." It's that simple. It is NOT too late to save our denomination. All we need is some good old Reformed-styled accountability, WITH TEETH. Let's all make that our "special concern."

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Christian Reformed Synod Agenda

It has long been an almost impossible job for many church councils and even synod delegates to work through almost 500 pages of synod agenda in the scanty month and a half between the time that they are published and the annual June synod meeting. This year that problem is considerably eased by a recent decision that the most important reports must as far as possible be given to the churches several months earlier. The extra time that the churches now have to consider them should help to achieve more responsible decisions.

THE "VISION-21" SYNOD?

A quick survey of the business to be done suggests that this synod might be remembered as that of "Vision-21." Our readers may remember (See the Feb., March and May Outlooks) that this is the title given to the report of an elite committee

of business executives who, after being asked to make a study of our denomination's administration, proposed that, in order to become more efficient and save money, all of the denominational agencies be put under the control of a "General Secretary" together with an "Executive Board." That proposal has provoked the opposition of the first 14 overtures (pp. 431-437), as well as the equally hostile reactions of boards and other agencies. The report of the new Board of World Ministries (now including World Missions and World Relief) three times criticizes Vision—21. It sees a disrupting effect on an organization which is just beginning to function (p. 78), likely detrimental effects on the support and program of missions and no evident cost saving (pp. 96, 97) and disputes promised saving of money and increased efficiency in world relief (p. 120-123). Perhaps most interesting (not to say, amusing) is

the reaction of the Board of Publications which deal with Vision-21 in a special report (pp. 50-55). That agency has long been informing us that it was becoming "less like a traditional church 'agency' and more like a Christian publishing company" (1985 and 1986 reports) most of whose customers are not within the denomination. Now, threatened by the proposed imposition of a powerful executive over it, it appeals to "three foundation principles," "The Lordship of Christ is paramount," "The local congregation possesses 'original' authority," and "We govern by means of delegated authority." It strenuously objects to having the church "administered by way of an hierarchical structure that one would design for a business." It observes that "The historic, Presbyterian system of government, which has been the traditional basis for the structure of the CRC, has no 'executive branch' of government, no bishopric or ecclesiastical hierarchy with executive power. The church is the whole Body of Christ made up of many interdependent members using their spiritual gifts for the mutual upbuilding of the whole body. The traditional Presbyterian structure for ordering the church is a series of governing bodies: consistory (possessing 'original' authority), classis, and synod. Agencies are established to provide particular services and mission activities. . . . They are in no sense 'management' or an 'executive board' of church government." Then it goes on to observe that, as in our time church members become more concerned with local and regional issues, the proposed centralization will never work. "If we move to a concentration of power in a central governing body, that governing body will be managing less and less with fewer and fewer resources as the church at large moves in another direction" (p. 51).

It is refreshing to see one of our most independently inclined bureaucracies now stating so well the case that many of us have long been trying to make against the current perversions of church government. Its apt statement of the matter fails only to observe what moved the church fathers to form this Presbyterian (or Reformed) church order. That order was not a mere "tradition," but the pattern which they saw the Lord teaching us in His Word. If we are ever to find a satisfactory way out of our growing bureaucratic morass, on which this discussion is focussing attention, we will need to rediscover and follow that Biblical guide, as our Reformed fathers did. In view of the volume of opposition aroused by Vision-21, its acceptance by this synod does not seem likely. If the argument about it prods us to seek a Biblical reform of the real and growing abuses in our church administration, its effect could turn out to be very wholesome.

While, on one hand, Vision-21 proposes a more highly centralized and hierarchical form of government, Overtures 15 from Classis Alberta South and 16 from B.C. Northwest (pp. 437, 438) suggests that the time has come to move in an op-

posite direction, asking the synod to consider beginning regional synods (perhaps meeting annually, with a general synod only once in three years). Such proposals have often been made and the increasing unwieldiness of one large synod and current restudies of church structure suggests that this may be a good time to begin such a move.

QUOTAS

A main argument advanced for Vision-21 was a claim that it would reduce the rising costs of our ever growing central agencies. A number of them are already having to complain about dwindling support. The World Mission states, "Our concern about the shortfall in quota receipts continues. Last year we received about 80 percent of the quota synod approved for us. We expect a gradual decline in this source of income and are taking steps in our five-year plan to reduce our agency's dependence on quota giving" (p. 99). World Relief states, "Financially it was a heartrending year. The gift flow did not rise to meet the needs and hopes reflected in the budget" (p. 119). A special subcommittee to deal with the problems of small churches is suggesting that they be permitted not to pay a percentage of the per-family quota levied on church families by the synod (p. 324-325). Four overtures (pp. 459-462) also focus attention on the subject of these quotas. Number 46 would have the number of families reported quarterly so as to make the billing of the churches more up-to-date and equitable. Number 47, objecting to a 1986 synod ruling, proposes a procedure by which a church may get classical permission to reduce its quota under certain conditions; it complains that the 1986 synod ruling "excuses from responsibility an unknown number of families for a variety of reasons. Next, it excuses the local church from responsibility for the quotas of those families. Third, it further excuses the classis from all but the confirmation of an attainable quota percentage" (p. 460) Notice the obvious assumption in all this kind of argument that the synod and classis have a right and duty to demand of each family a fixed amount as though it were a tax. Overture 48 asks for a separation of the quotas for Calvin College from that of Calvin Seminary. And the same classis (Orange City) in Overture 49 asks the synod to revise the 1985 decision on the Bredeweg appeal, the first sentence of which read "For an individual or a church to withhold certain quotas is not only contrary to Church Order Article 29 but also breaks faith with and erodes the unity and strength of the denomination." The overture points out in its grounds that "1. This decision is based on a misapplication of the Church Order. Article 29. . . states that 'the decision of the assemblies shall be considered settled and binding, unless it is proved that they conflict with the Word of God or the Church Order.' With regard to quota decisions this means only that the amount recommended to the churches is settled and binding; It

does not mean that the amount churches may give is settled and binding." Then in a second ground it calls attention to the basic 1939 (Article 90) decisions that "any unpaid quota may not be held against a church as a debt" and that the term "quota" is to be used "to indicate the amount per family recommended by the synod." Overture 50 even more clearly highlights and seeks to correct the abuse of quotas.

As the "RECOMMENDATIONS" they were intended to be, to give church members a guide to the approximate amount of support that is needed to fund the churches' common projects, all undertaken in obedience to the Word of God and in conformity of our common confessions, one can hardly find fault with such "quotas," and usually there has been little difficulty in more than meeting them. When, however, they are perverted into "assessments" to compel payment for programs that contradict the Scriptures and our confessions—taxes for which the agencies owe those who give them no accounting, they become the kind of abuses of which we confess in our Belgic Confession Article 31, "we reject all human inventions, and all laws which man would introduce into the worship of God, thereby to bind and compel the conscience in any manner whatever." Such compulsory "giving," as a speaker at last year's conference of concerned aptly pointed out, is a gross perversion of everything the Lord teaches us in His Word about Christian giving (2 Corinthians 8 and 9).

THE ECUMENICAL CHARTER

If Vision-21 and its disruptive implications have captured general attention, another proposal that is at least as threatening to the church and to the gospel has been quietly moving toward acceptance almost unnoticed. That is the Ecumenical Charter which the Interchurch Relations Committee wants the Synod to adopt this year (pp. 156, 157, 170-175). Drawn up by a small sub-committee of that agency appointed in 1983, the committee tried to have it adopted in 1985, but the synod referred it to the churches for study until this year. Noting how little church attention and response the document has received, and some (sharp) criticisms of it in the *RES Theological Forum*, the committee has made several extensive revisions, but it wants to see it adopted now without being referred back to the churches (p. 157).

The casual reader, trying to wade through 500 pages of agenda and pick out what is important, may, noticing the broad and airy generalizations of this document, dismiss it as another, rather meaningless "declaration." What difference, if any, will it make? We need to take notice of the fact that in the "mainline churches," one of the most inexcusable activities that has aroused more disgust on the part of multitudes of members and driven them out of those churches in droves, has been the "ecumenical" involvement in the World Council which has been diverting vast sums of

church money to support guerilla movements that murder Christians and destroy churches and missions. Our committee might reply that it is not proposing that we now join the WCC (though some of its veteran members have long advocated that). But if we adopt the charter, we will join the WCC and every other such apostate alliance. We in this document will state that WE ARE ALREADY ONE WITH EVERY CHURCH REGARDLESS OF DIFFERENCES (including even in such matters as "confessional formulas" and theologies) and that we must and will dialog with them toward showing that "unity," the "IDEAL FORM" of which "IS NOT YET KNOWN!" Faced by this declaration, is it surprising that in the *RES Theological Forum* the Indonesian correspondent had to ask, "How far does the Charter permit the CRC to depart from its traditional stance as a confessional church?" (If our confessional "forms of unity" no longer unite us, what does?) The earlier version of the Charter which the churches have seen, was prefaced by a preliminary statement (not part of it) that it "was based on broad biblical perspectives" and reflected John 17... Ephesians 4 and "a host of others," "the ancient creeds and Reformed confessions" (including the Belgic Confession Articles XXVII to XXIX and the Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 21) and was consistent with earlier church policy decisions, notably those of 1944. After criticisms (see January 1987 *Outlook*, "Approaching Ecumenical Suicide?"), the committee has now included this preliminary statement in the revised document. Observe that, whether in or outside of the document, those statements are simply UNTRUE. The theme of the charter, that all churches are one regardless of their differences, flatly contradicts our Lord's teaching that His people are chosen "out of the world" and "sanctified through His truth." The Charter wants nothing to do with His warnings against "false Christs and false prophets" who "will deceive many" or with the admonition not to believe "every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world." Its commitment to a unity with all churches flatly contradicts the Belgic Confession's (Article 29) careful differentiation of the true from the false church. The document does not agree with the emphasis of our churches' 1944 decisions, but is the opposite to them. Even with the editorial changes which tend to obscure a little its flagrant repudiation of theological differences, it still amounts, as the Indonesian delegate saw, to a rejection of our churches' creeds. In the *Theological Forum* already mentioned the representative of the Dutch CRC and even that of the liberal GKN, pointed out that it is not true that we do not know "the form of unity" which the church is to seek. This can only be said by a church which rejects the Bible's teaching about what the Lord called His church to be!

The committee wants this document adopted now. When we make this official statement, we

really confess a unity with every church, no matter how apostate it may be. Next year the committee had scheduled us to join the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, which has long been a virtual subsidiary to the WCC. This Alliance has for some time been wooing and flattering some of our theologians (pp. 160, 161; cf. 197-201) and next year's envisioned joining it means that we ALLY ourselves with a body which states that "the Reformed tradition" is not "any narrow and exclusive definition of faith and order," and with some of the most liberal churches in the U.S. These include the big United Presbyterian denomination whose toleration of denial of Christ's deity has driven out of it the Evangelical Presbyterians who are currently seeking closer relations with us (pp. 194-196), and the even more liberal United Church of Christ. The Ecumenical Charter is a product of, by and for our increasingly independent Interchurch Relations Committee. If we adopt it, it will free the committee to engage in whatever ecumenical adventures it may choose to explore and will commit us to virtually unlimited support of every kind of ecumenical venture. Such a course can never lead to church reformation, but only to sharing the apostasy against which the Lord and His apostles warned us.

Overtures 32, 33 and 34 all oppose adoption of the Ecumenical charter because of its ambiguity and imprecision, preoccupation with the work of one committee, failure to consider other Reformed churches, its unbiblical and unconfessional character, and its unsuitability to guide us in the problems which we actually face in relations with other churches. Will the synod listen and take a critical look at what it is being urged to approve?

THE FEMINIST ISSUE

The feminist drive for office, with which our synods have been seeking to temporize and compromise, continues to haunt us. This year it confronts us in two reports of a study committee on the Authority and Function of Deacons (reviewed in our April issue). A synod in 1984 decided to permit women to serve as deacons provided that their work as deacons be distinguished from that of the elders. Because of the resulting confusion, the synod of the next year appointed the committee to study that distinction. Now its majority wants to give in to the feminist drive to exploit the confusion of offices in order to gain a full share in church government. A minority proposes that, if the synod's condition for admitting women as deacons is maintained, the deacons will have to be separated from the governing consistories.

The feminist issue also has to be faced in several overtures. Classis Grand Rapids East in Overture 27 would have the synod reject the '84 statement that the Bible teaches that man is to be "head" to exercise leadership and direction. At some length, it attempts to nullify the Biblical passages that distinguish between the differing roles of the sexes (notably 1 Cor. 11 and 14 and 1

Timothy 2) and, by misdirected appeals to the office of the believer, deny the plain Biblical teachings about church offices. It also proposes in Overture 28 to reverse the decisions that women are not eligible for the office of elder and minister.

On the other hand, Classis Illiaua, in Overture 29, proposes to nullify the decision of 1984 to make women eligible for any church office, as contrary to the Word of God (1 Cor. 14:34; 1 Tim. 3:2,12), and causing division in the churches.

Finally, Classis Rocky Mountain, in Overture 30, would make the election of "qualified members" to all offices a local option (ignoring the Biblical restrictions already mentioned). Our churches will have to make up their minds whether to be conscientiously Biblical or not. Temporizing and compromise can only produce more conflict and increase the drift of members to other church fellowships that know what they believe and why.

DISCRIMINATION

The Synodical Committee on Race Relations has for many years been handicapped by two fundamental objections to its existence. (1) It is dedicated to the contradictory aim of removing race discrimination by giving special support to selected people and groups only on the basis of their race. To help needy people and deserving students invites general appreciation and support; to give or deny help only on the basis of color, as this committee does, is hypocrisy. It promotes the very sin it is supposed to oppose. (2) Having no field of operations of its own, the committee over the years receives funds using a large part of it for its own support and the rest for its racially limited grants to others, an inherently foolish and wasteful procedure. Despite the indefensibility of such a program, successive synods have annually increased its support from church quotas. Especially in recent years as it has been venturing into a program for developing and training "multiracial-leadership." It, in addition to its own direct quotas, has been soliciting and getting extra "assessments" from all kinds of other agencies, which must show their opposition to "racism" by their support. Now the committee (like some of these other agencies—see pp. 240, 47, 120, 124) is asking the synod to "increase the SCORR quota by an amount comparable to that which the Advisory Council or Multiracial Leadership members formerly paid SCORR as their individual agency assessments for membership on the Advisory Council." The perusal of its report shows how it is naturally involved in a wide variety of efforts to secure preferential advancement for non-whites in all kinds of church, educational and business activities. Its regular report is accompanied by an additional plan for strategies and goals to achieve the same end (pp. 247-257). In addition to SCORR's reports on its special programs for non-whites, the agenda also contains a report of a special committee on "Ordination of Pastors from

Multiracial Groups" (pp. 356-370). This report suggests special efforts and considerations to attract such churches into the denomination (p. 358), and deals with advantages being offered to non-whites to attract them into the churches' ministry. The synod a few years ago made special modifications to the Church Order for the Indian churches and later agreed to special seminary training programs for Indians, Hispanics, Asiatics and Blacks which would permit them to be ordained when they were half-way through the program. The committee now proposes a variety of changes in the Church Order to adjust it to the special arrangements introduced to accommodate churches of these other races. When we once commit ourselves to sanctifying various kinds of racial discrimination with the claim that that eliminates such discrimination, where do we stop the nonsense! Could we imagine Paul endorsing such hypocrisy? He immediately denounced it when Peter made concessions to it (Gal. 2:11 ff.)!

While the details of our church practice and customs may and can usually be rather easily adjusted to other circumstances, we do people from other races no honor of favor when we think that we have to scale down our Biblical doctrines, creeds or church order as a concession to them. When they become committed to the gospel they often quickly outstrip in their enthusiasm for its doctrines and confession, our theologians who seem eager to abandon them. The Lord's gospel does not have a race label and we have no right to stick such labels on it.

Look at the outrageous racial discrimination we have now created. Members of non-white races can be ordained to our churches' ministry with half of the usually required seminary education. At the same time white students who have graduated from some other seminary than that of our church, must spend at least one extra year (sometimes two) at Calvin to be declared eligible! Overture 22 would drop that unnecessary and unfair extra study at Calvin, and Overture 21 seeks to further correct the present injustice by putting licensing and candidacy under the control of classis where it ought to be, instead of under Calvin Seminary's partisan administration, which is not a church assembly. Why should a student from San Diego have to go to Grand Rapids for a seminary interview instead of to the assembly of our California churches which he seeks to serve?

OTHER AGENDA

The synod agenda necessarily gives special attention to problems that demand decisions, and this survey has noted some of them. At the same time, it reports on more diverse and routine matters. We should notice, for example, the continued expansion of the Back-to-God radio and TV programs, not only in English, but in Arabic, Spanish, Portugese, Chinese, French, Indonesian and Russian languages. The 1986 responses increased 25% over 1985's (p. 19).

We notice the decrease in *Banner* subscriptions

and advertising (p. 34) and the postponement of the new hymnal release until September (p. 40).

Home Missions are seeking to limit the amount and shorten the time of subsidizing missions and new churches. Both in foreign and home missions there is plenty of evidence that overly generous and long-term help, although given with excellent intentions, can hinder rather than help the progress of the gospel. (p. 67). At the same time, trying to program church growth like a sales campaign—100,000 members in a dozen years (p. 57), and preferably non-white! (pp. 66)—is disturbing. In foreign fields we notice the withdrawal from Jordan and Bangladesh and the continuing Mexico controversy (p. 82), the continued church growth and mission retirement in Nigeria, church growth in the Dominican Republic, (pp. 84 ff.) World Relief begun as disaster relief, moving into developmental programs, is also becoming involved in what looks like a more doubtful business of trying to organize the deacons of area churches (pp. 109 ff.). In general, broader agencies should not do what can be done by local churches.

The Interchurch relations Committee wants the churches in the next year to consider rejoining the National Association of Evangelicals, which we left in 1951. The Committee presents a long report which appears to be worth the requested study by the churches during the next year (pp. 161, 162; 176-193). A committee to study the churches' calling system proposes giving churches the freedom to call ministers for a term rather than indefinitely, and it wants to give the work to the Ministerial Information Service of the Pastor Church Relations Committee (pp. 422-430). Overture 20 (p. 440), opposes the first and supports the second proposal. Overture 23 would try to reduce the size of synods. Overture 25 would make the rather ambiguous 1972 "Report 44" on the nature and extent of the Bible's authority invalid, and Number 26 would make the 1959 versions of the creeds official because the later changes were irregularly adopted. Overtures 36, 37, 38 and 39 are critical of a Fund for Needy Churches proposal to cut off subsidy to churches of less than 20 families (pp. 321-336; 453, 454). Overture 43 presents a statement against pornography. Overture 54 would, in the interests of ministers' equality, set a maximum salary for any minister employed by the synod. While Classis B.C. Northwest (Overture 44) wants us to stop supporting the Communist CEPAD organization in Nicaragua through World Relief (p. 106), Classis Lake Erie (Overture 45) wants us to pray and work for peace with its Communist government.

As we look over the business of this coming assembly, we should remember that not it, but the many and diverse congregations that it for a few days represents, are called to be the Lord's churches. For their health and faithful Christian testimony, we, like the assembly, must labor and pray.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

THE FOURTH DAY

Dear Editor:

I am writing this letter to say a loud "AMEN!" to two articles in the February issue.

The first is a review of Howard J. Van Till's *The Fourth Day* by Lester De Koster. When I attended Calvin College I took an astronomy course with Dr. Van Till. I many times objected to his teaching of evolution, but he thought that I was rather silly and simplistic. Not only his book, but his entire course "is an exercise in short-changing the Bible."

I might add that the Biology and Geology courses at Calvin are no less evolutionistic than the astronomy courses. In one Biology course for example we were taught that the peppered moths in England were clear evidence for evolution. When I objected that it was only evidence of what happens within a species when the environment changes, the teacher accused me of being afraid of evolution. The science professors at Calvin are very scholarly. When someone objects to their clearly unbiblical teaching he is generally not answered with good scholarship but with name-calling, with psychological categorizing.

I, as a graduate of Calvin College, have for years been wondering with Lester De Koster what claim the Board of Trustees has left on the trust of its constituency.

The second article is "Misreading Matthew 18" by J. Tuininga. I believe that this misuse has become a big obstacle to proper discipline in the CRC.

As a student, I wrote a short article in which I criticized the doctrinal teaching of a book written by a CRC minister, published by Eerdmans and for sale in bookstores. In other words, it was a very public matter. Yet, I was questioned by some members of the Board of Trustees of Calvin College and Seminary as to whether I had first talked to that particular minister in line with Matthew 18.

At another time, I and two other students brought charges against a Calvin College professor to President Diekema. These were very well documented charges of this professor's public teaching in many classes over the

course of a year. He very clearly taught that belief in an inerrant Bible was unscholarly. We were asked if we had followed the procedures outlined by Christ in Matthew 18 in objecting to this professor's public sin against the church that had entrusted him with teaching her young people. Of course, because we didn't follow this procedure, we were given the run-around and eventually nothing was done.

This confusion is truly unbelievable. As a matter of fact, I don't believe it is confusion at all. I believe people in "powerful" positions are purposely misusing Matthew 18 in order to protect their colleagues and friends. As Tuininga says, "Public sins call for a public rebuke and a public apology." Again I say "AMEN!"

Yours in Christ
Wayne Leigh
(Christian Reformed Japan
Mission, Tokyo, Japan)

A LOOK AT BOOKS

The Ruling Elder, by Samuel Miller. Presbyterian Heritage Publications, P.O. Box 8812, Jackson, MS. 39204. 1987 Reprint, 322 pps., Hard Cover \$14.95. Reviewed by William Shishko, pastor, Orthodox Presbyterian Church, Franklin Square, N.Y.

Some years ago, *The Outlook* published the substance of an address given by Mr. Paul M. Ingeneri at the annual meeting of the Reformed Fellowship. The address was entitled, "The Crucial Role of the Eldership in a Church Desiring to Remain Faithful to the Lord" (*Outlook*, January, 1983.) Ingeneri concluded his challenging address by affirming, "We must regain a consciousness of the unique authority of our elder's office and the proper focus of our officer service." Samuel Miller's *The Ruling Elder*, first published in 1831 and now again made available through the service of Presbyterian Heritage Publications, is an outstanding tool to assist elders in our Reformed and Presbyterian churches that they might do that very thing.

Miller served for some 35 years as professor of Ecclesiastical History and Church Government in the first generation of Princeton Seminary. He is one of our staunchly Calvinistic Fathers whose name has heretofore been swept under the carpet of "contemporary Christi-

anity." There is a renewed interest in his works, however, and deservedly so. His address of Christian day school education, delivered nearly a century and a half ago, advances the same warnings about public education, and directives on truly Christian education which now dress the pages of popular evangelical publications. The volume now under review is so remarkably applicable to the present situation in our churches that Miller could easily have composed it in our decade.

"Faithful discipline... ought to be regarded as one of the most precious means of grace, by which offenders are humbled, softened, and brought to repentance; the Church purged of unworthy members; offences removed; the honor of Christ promoted; real Christians stimulated and improved in their spiritual course; faithful testimony borne against error and crime; the professing family of Christ made to appear holy and beautiful in the view of the world" (p. 174). Miller sees such discipline as essential, lays out the historical and theological warrant for such discipline as administered by a class of officers distinct from the Teaching Elder, and defines the qualifications for such overseers as well as their particular role in the life of the congregation and beyond. Can any Reformation-minded Minister or Ruling Elder doubt that such a volume is a welcome contribution in our day of ecclesiastical egalitarianism and congregational anarchy?

While Miller's perspective is essentially that of early American Presbyterianism (although he unhesitatingly departs from the traditions of his day when convinced those traditions are not representative of historic Christian practice), he is well aware of other schools of thought, especially the Scottish and Continental. In the pages of this volume one may become acquainted with the distinct practices of the Reformed Churches of France and the Netherlands, and also with the strong views of Eldership as presented by Calvin (pp. 128-130), Ursinus (p. 137f.) and Zanchius (p. 137f) among others.

Neither is Miller oblivious to those questions which seem to possess our attention in the 1980's. There is no equivocation here when declaring that "only male members" of a congregation are eligible to serve in the office of Elder or Deacon (pps. 260, 273f.). His presentation comes, interestingly enough, against a backdrop in which there were at least some arguments for female elders, though only advanced among the more mystical and clearly aberrant sects still regarding themselves as Christian.

Especially as Presbyterian and Reformed (and many Baptist) lovers of historic Calvinism become more familiar with our "roots," we must regard this reprint as a worthy contribution in the field of truly Biblical church government. May our Consistories and Sessions profit from these pages of pastoral wisdom still needed in our day which cries for reformation... reformation which must begin with the undershepherds of Christ's Church.

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