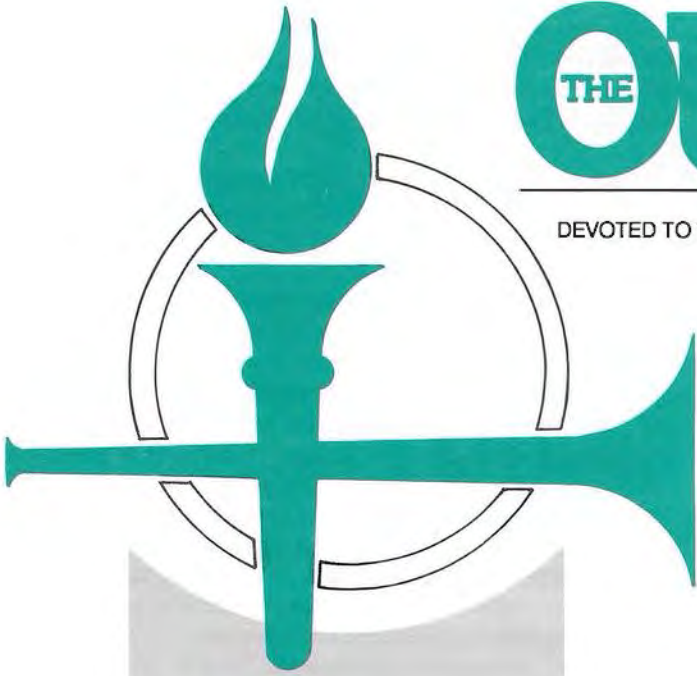


THE OUTLOOK

DEVOTED TO THE EXPOSITION AND DEFENSE OF THE REFORMED FAITH

november 1987



Assemblies

Losing the Gospel

Way to Renewal

THANKSGIVING MEDITATION

THANKSGIVING PRAYER THAT PLEASES GOD

John Blankespoor

"The Lord detests the sacrifice of the wicked, but the prayer of the upright pleases Him. Prov. 15:8



In this season of the year we celebrate Thanksgiving Day, in Canada on October 10 and in the U.S. on November 26. We should be grateful, that, even though our countries are not what they should be, their governments still set aside such days. In the United States this was begun by the pilgrim fathers. Abraham Lincoln set this day aside as a national holiday in the United States. Since then it has been set aside by presidential proclamation as a day for thanksgiving.

It is set aside to thank God for material gifts. Originally these were crops during the past growing season. Even though the percentage of farmers has decreased, it is still fitting to thank the Lord for the products of the land, business, and labor, and everything else He has given.



In the text quoted above we read about two kinds of people, the wicked and the righteous. The book of Proverbs contrasts the two. These proverbs describe the antithesis and are moral regulations for our lives.

The wicked do not know the Lord, nor fear Him. Although they may have some form of religion, they are Godless people. Many of these people also celebrate Thanksgiving Day. But this observance really doesn't "fit" in their way of living and thinking. How can they thank the Lord whom they don't know? Christ is not in their hearts. They don't recognize God in their lives, and He is not their father (John 8:41, 44). How can such people possibly truly thank God as our heavenly Father?

The other kind of people are the upright. To be upright means walking in the way of right, living according to the commandments of the Lord. Upright people are sinners whose sins are covered by the blood of Christ. They are "born again," possessing the Holy Spirit. As a result they love the Lord and want to show this in their daily living.



We read of the *sacrifice* of the wicked and the prayer of the upright.

It is interesting that the writer, inspired by the Spirit, puts it this way. Don't the wicked often also pray, though formally, and don't the upright also bring sacrifices? Of course they do.

Notice that sacrifices are outward, and prayers are spiritual exercises that come from the heart. Sacrifices in the Old Testament are legally required forms of religion, while prayers were and still are more direct expressions of that which takes place within. In sacrifices the idea was that man was giving something to the Lord, while in prayers he often asks Him for something.

The Old Testament forms of religion in many ways were quite different from those of today. The church then did not have worship services on Sunday, with the Word preached, songs sung and prayers offered. *A most common expression of their religion was bringing sacrifices.* This was expected of all people in Israel. They expressed their faith in the sacrifices they brought to the Lord, sin-offerings, peace-offerings and thank-offerings. The Bible describes what kind of people some of them were by referring to their sacrifices. Cain's life is described in the kind of *sacrifice* he brought to the Lord. King Saul showed that he didn't really serve the Lord in that he himself brought sacrifices; he didn't need a priest. He didn't recognize God's instructions that only priests (types of Jesus) could bring sacrifices pleasing to God. In Ps. 50:9 the Lord says to the wicked that He had no need of a bull from their stall, or goats from their pens. Thus, in Proverbs the writer describes the wicked by referring to their sacrifices.

In contrast, Solomon describes the activity and nature of the people of God in a different way. He speaks first about their prayers. All true religion is deep within, and comes to expression especially in our prayers. Our prayer life is a good thermometer of our spiritual life. Our prayers reveal our relationship with the Lord. If our

prayers are shallow, our relations with the Lord are likely shallow. On the other hand the more genuine our prayers, the more genuine is the fellowship we usually have with the Lord.

Our thanksgiving begins with our prayers to the Lord. It has to be a thanksgiving from the heart. In the heart is the real difference between the thanksgiving of the world and that of the Christian. The upright child of God thanks God not merely with words, but also with actions including gifts of love and help for the needy neighbor. The purpose of God's work of salvation is that we glorify Him with such good works. Where much has been received, much must be given. Our many reasons to thank the Lord, and the millions of needy in the world, move us to show our gratitude and love to Him by such giving.

When we see how God wants us to be thankful, we know how largely we fail. How much of our thanksgiving is like that of the world, a happiness for material gifts. We need to pray for pardon of the sin of ingratitude. A contrite heart is pleasing to God, also in thanksgiving. Gratitude doesn't come easily or naturally, because we are all instinctively selfish. We need to learn "the prayer of the upright" of which Solomon speaks. We must pray that the Holy Spirit may give us hearts that "go" out to God and the neighbor. With that will go a real joy, like the joy of the Savior who lived to give.



Solomon says that "the Lord detests the sacrifice of the wicked." Other versions use the word "abhors." Isn't it frightening that the Lord detests something or some people? What we "detest," we utterly reject. Think of spoiled food. We say that "it stinks!" That's what the sacrifice of the wicked means to God! That's how the Lord reacts to their sacrifices? This suggests the Bible's description of hell as like Jerusalem's burning garbage dump.

Does this mean that the thanksgiving of the wicked is also abominable to Him and that He literally detests it? Is the selfish "thanksgiving" of the wicked abominable to Him? If words have any meaning, that's exactly how it is. I am aware that this kind of language is not very popular even in church. Many people would never say this. But remember how the Lord Jesus utterly rejected the formal religion of the Pharisees and how He pronounced woes and judgments upon them.

But the way "of the upright" is pleasing to Him.

What a contrast!

Blessed are those saved sinners who know and may believe that they are pleasing to God, also in this season. When God is pleased with us, He blesses us. His favor rests upon us, because of Christ our wonderful Savior. His blood pardons all of our sins and His Spirit enables us to begin with prayer in our hearts to glorify Him with *deeds* of thanksgiving.

If He is pleased with us, we also know that all things work together for good in our lives and that no one will ever be able to separate us from His love.

Real thanksgiving must begin in the heart, with prayers for forgiveness, and for the Spirit of our Savior. Also on Thanksgiving Day our greatest need is Jesus Christ.

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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FROM FISH TO AMPHIBIAN – IMPOSSIBLE

Aaldert Mennega

How did frogs, toads, newts and salamanders come into being? We know something about how amphibians produce offspring today and thus how the various species are perpetuated. So we know where today's amphibians originated. They came from their parents, and they in turn came from their parents. We can be confident that this is how things happened back in time for many years. But where did the first amphibians actually come from? How much do we know about that?

Our knowledge about the origin of amphibians is very limited. Basically there are only two ways of looking at this question. One way is to accept what God said about animal origins in Genesis. This tells us that God created them discontinuously and supernaturally by the Word of His Power. This is the position I take. To ask further questions about how God did this, by which mechanism or natural process, is then, of course, out of place. Supernatural acts cannot be investigated. We accept that basic premise by faith, and then go on to other pertinent questions.

A second way to deal with the issue of the origin of the amphibians is to buy into the evolutionary framework which attempts to answer this question on a purely mechanistic basis. Evolution theory allows only for events to occur according to the physical laws of nature. Miracles or other supernatural events are ruled out because they cannot be investigated and therefore fall outside the domain of scientific activity.

Evolutionists look for a natural process which would account for the appearance of amphibians from some pre-existing organisms through a gradual sequence. The classic and most reasonable picture painted by most evolutionists has the amphibians developing from a fish, more specifi-

cally from the lungfish. The latter are then thought to be the intermediate, or missing link, between fishes and amphibians.

Fishes have a unique structure and they function accordingly. Only fishes are structured in that particular way. Characteristic of fishes are at least the following traits. Their skin is usually covered with scales; they have a two-chambered heart; they have external gills for respiration; their major anterior arteries are directly related to their gill structures; they usually have a spiral valve in their small intestine; their skeletal features include many ribs, and a unique arrangement of the bones in the fins. A detailed list of the many other features of fishes goes beyond the aims of this writing.

Lungfishes are fishes, too, and share the above characteristics. What makes them special is the fact that they not only respire by gills like other fishes, but they have lungs as well, which some use to survive when they are burrowed down in the mud during dry periods. These lungs are actually swimbladders that connect with the esophagus, and are "well developed, highly vascularized, and used as a lung in respiration. Such swimbladders are more efficient respiratory organs than the lungs of many amphibians."⁽¹⁾

While the lungfish do have lungs as amphibians do, they should not at all be considered intermediate, because none of their organs are in an intermediate stage. All their organs are completely functional and cannot be considered a transition in any way. All their traits are basic fish traits, and regarding their lungs, these are not considered to be indicative of amphibian ancestry.

Comparing the proteins of lungfish with proteins of lamprey eels, other fish, and amphibians, and even of mammals, we find that they are equally different from all

of these. How then could the lungfish be intermediate between fishes and amphibians? Lungfish are tremendously isolated structurally from any nearest "cousin." Romer says that "the lungfishes are to be regarded as "uncles" rather than the actual progenitors of land vertebrates."(2)

Amphibians are quite unlike fishes, not only structurally but developmentally as well. We know how tadpoles (pollywogs) metamorphose into adult frogs. Fishes do not metamorphose but gradually grow from fry to adult. Tadpoles do have gills, but these are external gills which are lost during metamorphosis when the lungs take over respiratory function. These external gills are very different from the internal gills of fishes. Tadpole gills are not intermediate stages between fish gills and tetrapod lungs.

Structurally amphibians are unique in their own way. They have soft skin, lacking scales, hairs or feathers; they have simple sac-like lungs for adult respiration, their heart consists of three chambers: two atria and one ventricle; their skeleton is typically amphibian, with hollow bones, short ribs, a pelvic girdle attached to the sacrum, and includes the specific bone arrangement in their front and hind limbs.

As a class, the amphibians stand apart from the class of fishes on the one hand and the reptilian class on the other hand. The same is true for each of the subgroups, such as toads, frogs, newts and salamanders. Each group is discontinuous and is distinct from all other groups. There are no intermediates connecting all the various taxa. All are discontinuous. Even at the molecular level we find not a single trace of the traditional evolutionary sequence from fish to amphibian. Neither are amphibians intermediate between fishes and reptiles.

"At a molecular level there is no trace of the evolutionary transition from fish -> amphibian -> reptile -> mammal. So amphibia, always traditionally considered intermediate between fish and the other terrestrial vertebrates, are in molecular terms as far from fish as any group of reptiles or mammals!"(3)

Evolutionists today don't agree on how evolution is supposed to have occurred. Gradualists and saltationists disagree on the basic mechanism that would account for evolution. Gradualists claim that small mutations accumulate and eventually change one species into another, and this process then is said eventually to give rise to the various genera, families, classes and phyla. Saltationists, on the other hand, recognize that the fossil record clearly indicates systematic gaps between all taxa. They observe the constancy of a species and the abrupt separation between species. These gaps indicate to them the time that an evolutionary jump (saltation) must have occurred. The nature of that jump is, of course, a mystery and cannot be explained.

Furthermore, some committed leading evolutionists openly state that evolution is not a known fact but remains a theory or hypothesis. They hold to that theory so firmly because that is where their faith lies. We know that nature does not correspond to the evolutionist paradigm. The origin of new organisms on earth "is still as enigmatic as when Darwin set sail on the Beagle."(4)

One wonders, in light of the evidence from the created structure, why secular evolutionists still cling to the theory

of organic evolution. The evidence in most cases is strongly contraindicatory, yet they are unwilling to let go of the theory. Because they are unable to accept the Genesis creation account as an alternative, we can understand that there is no way out for them except to say that we do not and cannot know anything about ultimate origins.

But why do some, who are professing Christians and believe in a Creator, also go along with this unscientific theory of evolutionary descent from fish to amphibian? How much are they willing to sacrifice to buy the acceptance of secular evolutionists? We must accept the evidence from nature that testifies against the theory of evolution. We must stand on the Word of God which gives such a clear and solid alternative to the false picture of secular evolutionism. Compromise in this area is both unnecessary and unacceptable. We are getting the facts straight, and God's Word stands as firm as ever.

(1) Weichert, Charles K. 1970. *Anatomy of the Chordates*. McGraw-Hill, Inc. New York, N.Y., p. 27.

(2) Romer, Alfred S. and T.S. Parsons 1977. *The Vertebrate Body*. W.B. Saunders Co., Philadelphia, PA., p. 53.

(3) Denton, Michael. 1986. *Evolution: A Theory In Crisis*. Adler & Adler, Publ., Inc., Bethesda, MD, p. 285.

(4) *ibid.*, p. 359.

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CHURCH ASSEMBLIES

ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN ASSEMBLY

Terry M. Gray

The 54th General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church met at Calvin College from June 11-18, 1987. As expected, this assembly was for the most part routine.

HOME MISSIONS

The Committee on Home Missions and Church Extension reported an aggressive outreach effort with six new fields being opened this year aimed at major metropolitan areas. The assembly commended its committee for its work. Two actions expressed the dissatisfaction of some in the OPC for perceived trends toward un-Biblical church growth methods. The committee was instructed to "set forth the principles and methods of church growth under which the Committee operates" and "to evaluate these principles and methods." For nearly five hours the assembly discussed what would be an appropriate response to an ad appearing in *Eternity* magazine (June 1987) that pictured a "yuppie" woman working out at a weight-lifting machine and asked readers to join in with the Home Missions Committee to reach this group of people who need to hear the gospel. The assembly directed its committee "to communicate regret and apology" to any who express offense at the ad and to establish a publicity review procedure for similar ads in the future. The assembly spent too much time on an unscheduled issue that prevented adequate treatment of other matters more properly before the assembly. A committee was established "to study ways for the General Assembly to process its work more expeditiously."

FOREIGN MISSIONS

The Committee on Foreign Missions presented favorable reports of the missionary efforts in Japan, Kenya, Korea, the Middle East and Taiwan. A new field was opened this year in Surinam, the OPC's first work in South America, and there was talk of yet another new field in the Philippines. Some of the personnel for these new fields may be veteran missionaries currently stationed in Korea; many believe that our work in Korea is nearly complete and that the time has come to leave that field. The General Assembly approved a "new" approach to supporting foreign missions that would allow for the expansion of the OPC's missionary efforts. A missionary, if approved by the Committee on Foreign Missions, can now raise funds by deputation to support a new foreign mission field. Also, a local church or a presbytery may sponsor a missionary to a new field with the cooperation and blessing of the Committee on Foreign Missions.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

The Committee on Christian Education sought and received the approval of the revision of the *Trinity Hym-*

nal. Several speeches questioned the doctrinal soundness of the new hymns. Not all were satisfied, but it appeared that the response of theological advisor Prof. John Frame persuaded the assembly that indeed the new hymnal was in accord with Reformed theology. The assembly adopted rules for commending a theological seminary; these include that the seminary has adopted the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms as its doctrinal standards and that a clear mechanism for determining subscription to these standards be operating. The assembly also approved a "Recommended Curriculum for Ministerial Preparation in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church."

ECUMENICITY

The General Assembly reaffirmed its commitment to the visible, organizational unity of the church and set out to practice that commitment by encouraging its Committee on Ecumenicity and Inter-church Relations to pursue discussions with a goal of eventual church union with the parallel committees in the Presbyterian Church in America and the Reformed Presbyterian Church in North America. The assembly also encouraged sessions, presbyteries and program committees to apply these principles of church unity as much as possible in their local sphere. The General Assembly approved a letter to be sent to the Interim Committee of the Reformed Ecumenical Synod entitled "Why the Membership of the GKN in the RES Must Be Terminated Now" due to the fact that the GKN tolerates homosexuality in the membership and the ministry, together with other deviations from Biblical Christianity. Again this year the OPC General Assembly refused to withdraw or to take threatening action, but chose to wait until RES Harare 1988.

STUDY COMMITTEES

The report of the Committee of Paedocommunion (children at the Lord's Supper) indicated that a majority on the committee were favorable toward the practice. There was no discussion of the issue on the floor of the assembly and the committee was continued in order to prepare a careful Biblical defense of its position.

The reports of the Committee on Hermeneutics of Women in Ordained Office contained an emphatic conclusion that women may not hold the office of elder. The committee has not completed its work with respect to the office of deacon. Both committees were continued for another year.

In response to an overture from one of the presbyteries, the assembly directed its Committee on Diaconal Ministries to study ways to aid small churches who are unable to support their own full-time pastor.

COMPLAINT

Complaints from the Presbytery of Southern California felt that the presbytery had erred in refusing to re-ordain a minister from the Presbyterian Church (USA) who had been received into that presbytery. The complaints argued that such a church is not a true church of Christ due to widespread unbelief of cardinal doctrines of the faith and due to the official adoption of neo-orthodoxy with the Confessions of 1967; and that ordination by such a church is not a valid ordination. The General Assembly denied the complaint on the grounds that while heresy may be widespread in that denomination, it may not be said that there is not a remnant of true Christians in their membership, their sessions or their presbyteries.

REFLECTIONS

At times during the assembly it appeared that the OPC was deeply divided and often along predictable lines. It is grievous that differences in opinion about implementation of common principles is accompanied with such a critical, uncharitable spirit, one that even impugns the motives of others. As the OPC has been forced to take specific stands on specific issues, differences appear, but if opposing sides just take a few steps back, they will find that they agree more with their brethren in the OPC on the principles behind these issues than with anyone else.

Dr. Terry M. Gray, a professor of Chemistry at Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan, reports on the general assembly of his church.

REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA (COVENANTER) SYNOD

James Curtis

The Synod of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in North America (Covenanter) convened at the Calvin Seminary Chapel in Grand Rapids, Michigan on Saturday June 13, 1987 with a worship service led by the retiring moderator, John McMillan.

When the roll of the 158th Synod was made up, this reporter was one of six elders delegated by their sessions for the first time. Two deacons were also at Synod for the first time (each Presbytery sends one deacon delegate to serve on the Finance Committee. Deacons are non-voting members of the court).

Elder Willard McMillan, DD (ruling elder in our Geneva congregation in Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania, professor of Bible at Geneva College and teaching elder as well), the brother of retiring moderator John McMillan, was elected moderator. He was the only one to be nominated—single nominations for offices at both Presbytery and Synod are normal.

Reports were made by all the denominational organizations including Reformation Translation Fellowship, Reformed Presbyterian Seminary, Geneva College, and others. One interesting report was presented by Harold Harrington on the Ottawa Theological Hall in Ottawa, Ontario. That is our (the St. Lawrence Presbytery's) theological seminary whose purpose is to prepare men for the ministry particularly in the Canadian churches (we have 3 or 4 of our 71 congregations in Canada). Up to now Ottawa Theological Hall has charged no tuition to its students, and it is open to other than Reformed Presbyterian students.

We received the following fraternal delegates from non-

NAPARC churches with which we maintain fraternal relations, Mr. David Compton, pastor of the Toronto congregation of the Free Church of Scotland and Pastor Riffort from the Reformed Church US (formerly Classis Eureka). Both of these denominations have historically been soundly Reformed. Although we have no official relations with the Reformed Presbyterian Church in the US, we received a fraternal letter from them. They are a small Reformed denomination centered around Atlanta, Georgia, which also holds to Christ being King of the nations as well as of His Church.

Our Synod last year passed a new Book of Church Government which was sent by overture to the sessions. A vast majority of our sessions and elders approved of this book. Now Presbytery and Synod will be constituted by one ruling elder from small congregations (those with less than 100 members) and by two ruling elders from large congregations, as well as all teaching elders under the jurisdiction of that court. The new Book of Church Government also makes us into a two-office church (elder and deacon) from three offices (teaching elder, ruling elder and deacon). Under special circumstances Presbytery can appoint a 'ruling' elder to perform any of the functions historically reserved for teaching elders. (Note: the church order of Dordt's office of minister of the Word is a Presbyterian 'teaching elder'.)

I was disappointed with Synod's approving money for graduate study by a man who has serious questions about one of our distinctives—Psalmody. My question is how can a man who has question(s) about any of our distinctives teach at our seminary or Geneva College and

produce men who are committed to them? When a vacancy occurs we will now have to deal with this question.

Many Reformed denominations face problems with either liberalism or evangelical Arminianism, but one does not find these evident in the RPCNA. We hope to grow closer to other orthodox Reformed denominations and

local congregations.

We trust that a warm welcome will be extended to all readers of *Outlook* who visit our churches or any of our courts.

Mr. James Curtis lives at Pontiac, Michigan.

PCA'S TWO ASSEMBLIES: PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

Carl W. Bogue

One year ago when the Presbyterian Church in America delegates left Philadelphia, the unmistakable polarity within the church was upon the minds of all. Many braced themselves with the thought that the 1987 assembly would be crucial. How crucial it was remains to be seen, but one way of viewing it is from the perspective of two assemblies. One makes good press and would delight the growing "majority" view. The other grieves the majority because of the conflict, and grieves the conservative minority even more because of substance.

The assembly, for the world to see, sets forth some good numbers. The outgoing moderator reported the PCA to be statistically America's fastest growing denomination. The commissioners voted to set a goal of more than doubling the number of congregations and members by the year 2000. The current numbers are 925 congregations and 160,000 members. The goal is 2000 congregations and 400,000 members. Such figures may well be as enviable to some outside the PCA as they are enticing to those within.

Financially the church is relatively healthy, though there continues to be difficulty in getting proportionate support for the various assembly committees and programs. Traditionally popular world missions continue to be the focus of PCA benevolences.

Two major personnel actions were MTW (Mission to the World) related. A leading ruling elder member of MTW throughout the PCA's young history, Gerald Sovereign of Gulf Breeze, Florida, was elected moderator of the assembly. On more than one occasion he was addressed as "sovereign" moderator. When MTW reported to the assembly, a major action was the election of John E. Kyle as coordinator (CEO) of MTW. Kyle was the original MTW coordinator for three years, and he now returns to that post to replace outgoing coordinator Paul Mc-Kaughan.

The "other" assembly reflects serious and growing division within a young church. Those having departed mainline churches for a conservative, reformed denomination are, if not disappointed, considerably restrained in their joy and optimism. The conservative/liberal and reformed/non-reformed battles, while less drastic, are no less conscience-driven than in previous ecclesiastical affiliations.

The tone for a divisive assembly was set in the opening worship. The outgoing moderator's "sermon" was an occasion for attacking the conservatives (or "thoroughly reformed" as they have been designated). Unity was the theme, but corresponding pleas for purity were muted. Judicial process was criticized as divisive, though Scripture and the PCA constitution see it as obligatory and loving. Perhaps symbolic of the latitudinarianism and independency of those unhappy with the Westminster standards was the practice of paedocommunion (child-communion) by at least one delegate's family at this opening communion service.

Key debate focused on ongoing recommendation of a "blue ribbon" committee which would drastically change the current structure of the church courts and their relationships. The mood of the assembly was clearly seen in a decisive affirmative vote (it must yet be approved by two-thirds of the presbyteries — no easy task), but a very strong minority saw in this action a repudiation of Presbyterianism. Over 125 felt so strongly that they signed a protest to this effect drafted by former Westminster Seminary president Edmund Clowney. Such a protest is not rare, but so many supporting it shows some strong division on something so basic as what is the essence of Presbyterianism.

The assembly continued its tendency to avoid taking a stand on various issues to which it commits time and money, originating from those within the church asking for the church's stand as supported by Scripture. Rather than adopt or reject the recommendations of study committees, the assembly chose not to rock the boat, by merely receiving the reports "for information." The issue of whether Roman baptism is valid and several important church/state issues received such treatment at this assembly. A strong anti-Masonic position has been sent to the churches for study, and the potentially divisive issue of paedocommunion was postponed for another year due to the "press of time."

When an issue is not merely received for information, but decided, the mind of the church seems to be ever broadening. One such issue was forced to be settled because it was the subject of a judicial case. Three general assemblies had sustained a complaint against a presbytery for tolerating a divorce between the sacraments and the

visible church. Finally a fourth judicial commission, while forced to admit the complaint was constitutionally and historically valid, recommended denying the complaint. The commission even spent several pages attacking the current constitution on judicial process. The assembly, preferring that membership in the Church of Jesus Christ not be a requirement for the receiving of the sacraments, adopted the commission's recommendations, two unconstitutional aspects notwithstanding.

Many have commented on how surprisingly calm the assembly was in spite of potentially controversial issues. A

lack of intemperate outbursts, however, is no evidence of unity. We sing lustily Psalm 133. As a church, however, we are unclear whether there will be unity, or on what terms we shall strive for unity. The haunting voice of the prophet seemed to echo through the assembly: "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?"

Rev. Carl W. Bogue is the pastor of Faith Presbyterian Church in America at Akron, Ohio.

THE RIGHT TO RENEWAL

Lester De Koster

There is anxiety in the Christian Reformed Church.

Some attach theirs to women in office; others to various speculations on the Calvin campus; still others to boondoggling at synods and Establishment manipulation of the denomination to serve its own hobbies. There is also a general concern that preaching is at low ebb, with commitment to the Forms of Unity steadily eroding.

These anxieties surface in predictable ways. Some few congregations have opted out; others talk of it. A rather large number of members have identified with the Committee of the Concerned, and a number of churches have been represented at meetings in the Lansing, Illinois, Lynwood Church to share frustrations.

But, as other denominational experiences suggest, there is little hope for the restoration of a lost theological unity among us. Between the "Bible prohibits women in church office" interpretation of the Word, and the "Bible does not prohibit women in church office" there is no middle ground. "Did God say?" offers but two exclusive alternatives: Yes or No. While something like, "You take your interpretation and I'll take mine" opens the way to the loss of biblical authority altogether.

If, however, no way to unity of mind is possible, what then?

For many believers the road to ultimate schism portends a forbidding journey.

Some lack the initiative or the energy or sense of the imperative even to contemplate a denominational split. Their more ardent fellows are as frustrated with them as with the Establishment.

Others have an instinctive distaste for reading the Body of Christ so long as it retains some evidence of life. Perhaps the on-going presence of boards and agencies is some assurance that not all is in jeopardy. The ecclesiastical machinery functions, and the steadily increasing demands for quota support suggest that at least some things are afoot.

But is there, then, no release of tensions in sight? Especially a release within the denominational framework?

Are we to go on the broad and popular way to a rever-

sal of much that was once meant by Christian Reformed? Will church office soon be officially opened to all? the Form of Subscription totally ignored? the Forms of Unity not even honored by the lip? the Scriptures become selectively normative, and preaching but one among several forms of Sunday entertainment?

Is this, realistically, our tomorrow?

Only God knows, of course.

But His foreknowledge relieves no one of responsibility.



There is an option available to those who hold "Christian Reformed" dear for what it really is, and could again mean to themselves and their children. There is a key to renewal, one at least worth taking in hand.

That key is the basic mark of the true church: the pure preaching of the Word of God. Here the Church was built; here the Church is built; here the Church will be built: on the Word purely preached.

But the Establishment mind has maneuvered itself into a throttle-hold on access to the pulpit ministry of the CRC. This mind is willing, indeed eager, to open CR pulpits to women; but it is adamant in closing them to qualified trainees of seminaries other than Calvin Seminary. By way of one seminary, through recommendation by one Board, go all roads to all pulpits in the CRC, including your own.

It is obvious, then, that the basic key to the renewal of the truly Reformed character of the CRC is in the hands of those whose mind is one of the reasons why renewal is urgent. And this mind manipulates synods to do its bidding. The synod just past reaffirmed the monopoly.

Does the Establishment fear open competition? and genuine freedom of choice?

And must this ever be so?

Is detouring the route to your pulpit through the Calvin Board and Seminary a biblical or confessional rule of the road?

Not at all!

It is only a route established by a Church Order which

synods more and more manipulate to endorse Establishment projects, and to beat down all others.

What a release of tension *within* the CRC might come if congregations re-assumed their inherent right to call, examine and ordain qualified graduates of, say, Mid-America Reformed Seminary to their pulpit ministries. Thus could those who believe that the CRC desperately needs renewal seek it where it has always been found: in the pure preaching of God's Word. Surely a right which now derives urgency from emergency!



But, Establishment repercussions? Threats, even?

Probably.

Especially some who might wink at the Church Order and synodical decisions as suits their own convenience could present themselves as aghast at your "violation" of "God's" order. Classes and synods may be lined up against you. But faced with the loss of your quota payments, the Establishment will find ways to re-think the matter. Dare them, and if they cut you off, use the money to hire another pastor of your choosing.

But let a few courageous congregations exercise their right — and it indeed *is* their right! — to fill their pulpits according to conscience, and the denomination will settle into a more amiable atmosphere than has prevailed for a long time. Live and let live! We have found room for all sorts of "congregationalism" under our tent so far; room will appear for this variety too!

But some congregations might follow this lead and at once call and ordain women as their ministers?

Probably so. But is it not entirely predictable that some synod will soon endorse that anyway — and synods thereafter will be deaf to petitions for correction of the error? Don't be too surprised if, after the pulpit is synodically

opened to women, the Establishment mind looks to making a "team" ministry mandatory. It's happened in other once-orthodox bodies.

But...your delegates might be excluded from classes and thus from synods? Not likely if you hold firm, considering quotas and pensions and all. Establishment projects cost money.

But if push comes to shove, just ask yourself sometime, seriously and with pen and paper in hand, just what benefit your congregation now derives from all the meetings, classical and synodical, from which you might be excluded. It is a safe guess that almost no one in the whole congregation would know the difference whether your delegates attended classis or synod, or were barred, speak or are silent. Who knows it now? And as to the gadding about characteristic of boards, agencies and staffs, who is beneficiary? What concrete benefit filters down to your pew for the funds that filter up and disappear?

It must go into outreach?

You might check that out.

In a word, a heritage worth preserving is worth fighting for. The Establishment long ago learned how to play hardball, as they say. It's time you learned that too. If you are truly weary of being cuffed about by those whose bills you meekly pay, and more importantly believe that God shares that weariness, there is a way within the denominational fold....

Get the Word purely preached under your steeple.

And with God be the rest.

Dr. Lester De Koster is a former Calvin College professor and retired editor of The Banner living at Grand Rapids, Michigan.

HOW TO LOSE THE GOSPEL

PDJ

The globe on the cover of the August 24 *Banner*, at first glance suggests the familiar ad of a certain paint company and then, on a closer look, the red tide of Russian Communism spilling over the world. The text, however, about Christ's atonement "for the sins of the whole world," prepares us for the dominant theme of this issue of our denomination's paper, "universalism" (the teaching that all will be saved).

Entertaining Universalism

Professor Cornelius Plantinga of our Calvin Seminary, in a guest editorial, begins the series of special articles showing the strong appeal of the attractive arguments for

universalism. "Turning to the Scriptures doesn't settle the matter either, for from them we hear more than one voice." Tracing universalism's origins on occasion under a high Calvinism, its historic appeal to great theologians, its plausible arguments, and the difficulties of the idea that "God wants everybody saved but never intends to save all," he, while not endorsing universalism, commends those who are raising the questions and suggests the need for more discussion.

Next, Rev. Neal Punt advocates an approach to all as elect, on his unprovable assumption that "all persons are elect in Christ, except those who the Bible explicitly declares will be finally lost." Notice the contrast between

this notion and our Lord's warnings that, "Many are called, but few are chosen" (Matt. 22:14). In contrast with the Canons of Dordt's Calvinistic polemic against Arminianism, he has been promoting this idea as a satisfactory middle way to resolve the conflict between the two.

The most orthodox-sounding of the series of articles is that of David Feddes, a 1987 graduate of Calvin Seminary, and new pastor of the Westmount Church at Strathroy, Ontario. Although expressing appreciation for Punt's stress on breadth of the texts which he cited, he points out that these are counterbalanced by those in which our Lord stressed the narrowness and exclusiveness of the gospel. Luke 9:50 is accompanied by Luke 11:23, and our Lord warned, "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life and only a few find it" (Matt. 7:13, 14). "There are still times to remember the traditional premise, that the broad road leads to destruction. And in our witnessing, we should assume only that the just will live by faith. We do not proclaim unconditional good news. We proclaim the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes."

Finally, Dr. Richard J. Mouw, now a professor at Fuller Theological Seminary, writes on "The Waning of Hell." Citing Liberal Lutheran Martin Marty's observations that Christians today rarely think of hell, Mouw, while not endorsing "the universalistic teaching that all people will be saved in the end," is also not "absolutely certain that universalism is false." He, in general, is inclined to welcome the reduced emphasis on hell and God's punishment (although he found some urban black preachers, in their concern about social justice, stressing it). "We cannot doubt that we have talked about hell too much. We have often said much more than Scripture allows us to say. To admit this, to want to correct this, is not liberalism. It is an important exercise in Christian honesty." "It is not so important, finally, that we think and talk a lot about hell." (Mouw's comments recall the suggestion of his predecessor at Fuller, also a former Calvin College professor, who started an argument in *The Reformed Journal* some years ago by his suggestion that we should hope that hell would be empty. Later we heard him [L. Smedes] talk himself out of a teaching job in Calvin Seminary when he suggested in his synod interview that he thought of hell as something like being caught in an airplane over O'Hare Field unable to come down. Evidently many of the delegates were convinced that such joking about hell did not show appropriate qualification for teaching gospel preachers.)

Mouw's minimizing hell somewhat parallels Karl Barth's "slight correction" of John Calvin in his treatment of Calvin's Catechism (*The Faith of the Church*, p. 173): "We do not have to believe in hell and in eternal death. I may only believe in the resurrection and the judgment of Christ, the judge and advocate, who has loved me and defended by cause."

A few years ago a Calvin College professor saw the threat to the Christian faith and life among us as a creeping universalism — not with respect to salvation, but first a cultural universalism, that slides also into a universalism about salvation. This *Banner* strikingly confirms his perception.

Despite Mouw's assurance that such views are "not liberalism," but "Christian honesty," his and others' avowed uncertainty about universalism are the direct result of a Liberal misuse of the Scriptures. That way of treating the Scriptures, as Plantinga said, "hears in them more than one voice," so that our Lord's stern warnings are considered opposed to some writings of the Apostle Paul. The direct result is that the gospel certainties are replaced by these academic uncertainties. Paul in his pastoral letters repeatedly warned us against this very thing: "Shun foolish questionings... for they are unprofitable and vain" (Titus 2:9; cf. 1 Tim. 1:4; 6:3 ff.). The way in which this universalistic speculation must undercut serious gospel proclamation is obvious. We can hardly join Paul's "Knowing therefore the fear of the Lord, we persuade men," when we preface it by contradicting the gospel certainty of judgment which drives that persuasion (2 Cor. 5:10, 11). How can we warn anyone to "flee from the wrath to come," when we contradict John the Baptist's warning of the judgment fires, with an assurance that a loving God could hardly punish anyone (Matt. and Luke 3:7)? Must not the assumption that all who do not reject the gospel are saved suggest that we bring the gospel to NO one in order that all may be saved? It is hardly an accident that such universalisms have characterized dying churches and their missions.

It is significant that the one writer in this series who seriously argues against such universalism is moved to do so by the disagreement he sees between it and the Scriptures. If our churches are to recover a serious and convincing proclamation of the gospel, such a return to the Bible as God's Word is the route by which we must find it.

Denying the Antithesis

Plainly evident in these *Banner* articles encouraging a "creeping universalism," is a fact pointed out a while ago by another Calvin College professor, that such prevailing attitudes may be traced to and better understood as a perversion of "common grace" ideas. Thereby we begin to lose any sense of "antithesis" (or "opposition"), and therefore find "moments of truth" in everything. Dr. Henry Stob in 1983 published a very important essay on The Antithesis (in De Klerk and De Ridder's Baker book, *Perspectives on the Christian Reformed Church*, pp. 241-258). In this essay he maintains that the antithesis "was introduced not by God but by proud Beelzebub and by disobedient man" and that Christ came to remove it (p. 243, f.). Therefore, "the antithesis is for Christians less a principle to be applauded than a factor to be banished." It "in short, is what the gospel is out to destroy" (p. 245). If this means what it says, it means that this ("reconciling") Christian gospel is wiping out the difference between true and false, right and wrong, God and the devil! It may be that no one is stating the matter that crudely — but that is exactly what we see happening within the churches, including our own.

This is exactly the development which Harry Blamires characterized in his 1963 *The Christian Mind* (pp. 112, 13). The result is a culture "bedevilled by the it's-all-a-matter-of-opinion code," and "anarchy in which the difference between truth and falsehood will be no longer recognized." "Truth is regarded as a kind of pudding, or brew, which you concoct from human opinions," "something as-

sembled from a million answers, Yes, No and Don't know, obtained from a cross-section of the human race," instead of what God revealed.

"Salad Bar" Heresy

This modern "smorgasbord" or "salad bar approach" to Christian doctrine that suggests, "Choose your own from as wide a variety of ideas as possible, and mix to your taste!" is the exact opposite of the Bible's teaching of a faith that must be kept inviolate just as God gave it. Paul wrote, "O Timothy! Guard what was committed to your trust, avoiding the profane and vain babblings and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge — by professing it some have strayed concerning the faith" (1 Tim. 6:20). Similarly Jude must urge Christians "to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints" (v. 3). The "salad-bar," "choose your own mix" style of theology being promoted is the essence of every "heresy" — The word is a form of the verb "to choose" and, as Peter warned against it, means a self-chosen opinion, held in defiance of God's revealed truth (2 Peter 1: 16-2:2). There is no more effective way to lose the gospel (and to wreck a church) than to substitute for it such a "mix-your-own" doctrine.

God's Gospel Against the Devil's Universalism

Despite Dr. Stob's arguments against the Antithesis of truth against error, the Bible informs us that it was God, not the devil, who said (Gen. 3:15), "I will put enmity...." He, not the devil, throughout the Bible, announces and maintains and never minimizes or obscures this antithesis between true and false, between right and wrong, between Himself and the devil; it is the devil, who always attempts to obscure the differences, in order to achieve his purposes. The apostle John stressed the distinction between the truth and the lie, and that "no lie is of the truth" (1 John 2:21). Therefore he warned, (4:1 ff.), "Believe not every spirit, but prove the spirits whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world," and he went on to show how to tell the difference between the two.

Of the destructive process of obscuring the antithesis, *The Banner* propaganda for universalism is an exceptionally good example. Few may remember that the original name of our church publication *The Banner* was *The Banner of Truth*. Today we find its pages, while not exactly endorsing, yet expressing profuse appreciation for the devil's oldest lie, "Ye shall not surely die!" Every one in office in our churches solemnly vows to oppose and try to keep the church free from errors particularly the errors of Arminianism exposed in the Dordt Canons. Today, not only are these errors being commended, and the Canons' warnings against them ridiculed, but a much more extreme attack on the gospel's exclusive claim, "he who does not believe will be condemned" (Mark 16:16), the universalist heresy that all are saved, is being entertained.

The Christian and the church may indeed learn to better appreciate the gospel from the battle with false doctrines, but we do not have to welcome errors in order to properly "balance" our perception of God's truth! When the Bible's clear antithesis between true and false is obscured, and its revelation as the standard by which we

must test which is which ignored, the inevitable result is total confusion. The doctrines that contradict the gospel are welcomed for our education, instead of being rejected as the "destructive heresies" which they are. Thus we betray our trust of the gospel and we and our followers become the devil's dupes. We see this happening in this playing with universalism. (We also see it in the newly adopted ecumenical charter, which, despite cosmetic changes, begins with the assumption that all churches, regardless of differences, are one, and must seek to learn the as yet unknown truth by mutual dialog.) This destruction of any awareness of the antithesis between the gospel and its attackers is one of the basic causes of the growing confusion and disunity of our churches and of the demoralization of our educational and missionary programs.

The apostle Paul reminded us that the first requirement of a soldier in Christ's army (as that of an effective soldier in any army) is that he put aside other concerns, to obey his commanding officer (2 Tim. 2:4). He pointed out further that it isn't possible to even play a game unless the players abide by the rules (v. 5). How can a Christian or church expect to be anything but ridiculous when they ignore the orders of Christ, their Commander, and the rules He gave for Christian living? No ball team would tolerate a player who insisted on throwing the ball in the wrong basket. Yet it is such nonsense that we are seeing in our churches' publications and educational institutions when they entertain even such a far-out heresy as universalism. Thus our denomination is rapidly losing the respect of other members of the Reformed family of churches, as well as the respect of many others whom it encounters in efforts at missionary outreach. Forty years ago sailors who had had bitter experiences with Liberal chaplains sometimes expressed surprise and appreciation at hearing the gospel in a church service. In the last ten years as editor of this periodical I have on occasion encountered a similar surprise and appreciation of a publication that still tries to speak clearly in a testimony to the full gospel and against all compromise of it. The Lord has promised to sustain and use that kind of testimony to His Word. If our churches are to regain our lost unity, morale and credibility, we will have to prayerfully try to regain such a Biblical gospel testimony that presents it for what it is, God's saving truth against the devil's destructive lies. The apostle thanked God when he saw this testimony "welcomed...not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe" (1 Thess. 2:13).

Cassette Tapes of the address entitled
"Why Must We Contend the Faith"
given by Dr. Cornel Venema at the
1987 Annual Meeting of the Reformed
Fellowship are available at \$3.00 each.

Please send checks or money orders to:
Reformed Fellowship, Inc. (1987 Tapes)
4855 Starr St., S.E.
Grand Rapids, MI 49506

MID-AMERICA REFORMED SEMINARY YEAR #6 = 300% GROWTH!

N.D. Kloosterman

The 1987-88 academic year began on Thursday, September 3, with Convocation festivities in Orange City, Iowa. The Convocation speaker, Rev. Robert Grossmann, addressed gathered students, families and friends on "The Calvinist Ground of True Evangelism." On the evening of that same day, the Rev. J. Mark Beach, minister of the Word at the First CRC of Hoppers, Iowa, spoke on "The Great Ecclesiastical Divide."

Each year the Seminary begins its activities with a "Seminary Festival." People come to it from California, Washington, Colorado, Michigan, Ontario, Manitoba and Alberta. A Board Meeting is held at this time in order to give our Board members who also come from all over the U.S. and Canada a taste of the Seminary's academic and social life.

For this academic year, Mid-America has welcomed three returning students, one transfer student, and six new students:

They have come from Calvin College, Calvin Seminary, Reformed Bible College and Dordt College. One comes from the Reformed Church of the U.S. (formerly Eureka Classis) and another from the Orthodox Christian Reformed Church. Five of the students come from Canada, which limits employment opportunities for them and their wives.

This increase in the student body strains our modest resources for student financial aid. Our tuition is a minimal \$600 per semester — the largest burden of seminary expense pertains to living expenses, not tuition and books. Seminary policy requires that students first approach the appropriate assembly in their denomination (Classis or even Consistory) for student aid, so that the Seminary's financial aid does not preempt or replace the church's responsibility for supporting her ministerial students.

We are grateful that several (CRC) Classes have been willing to support men who have studied or are studying at Mid-America; these include Alberta North, Alberta South, Florida, Minnesota North, Minnesota South, and Orange City.

Unfortunately, several (CRC) Classes fail to under-

stand that when they support a *student* within their boundaries, they are not thereby supporting a *seminary* with financial gifts. The result is that because of the dislike on the part of some ministers for Mid-America, students who have grown up within congregations of a given Classis are denied financial assistance for essential family needs while in seminary. Some Classes are unaware that when a student studies at Mid-America, their student aid goes to aid *the student*, not to Mid-America!

This failure does, however, present an opportunity to readers of *Outlook*: perhaps you can gather some friends or members of your congregation, to sponsor a student who is studying at Mid-America — one from your area of the country, from your congregation. This financial sponsorship would permit personal acquaintance with and meaningful participation in the seminary education of future ministers in Christ's church.

Mid-America's students continue to be well received by congregations where they exhort and serve during the summer months. An intensive evaluation is completed when the students return from their summer assignments, and areas of weakness and strength are discussed and monitored.

While recognizing the Lord's faithfulness in the continued, adequate financial support of the Seminary, we are interested in maintaining regular, systematic giving so that we can avoid seasonal fluctuations in receipts. Canadian supporters will want to know that progress is being made in obtaining tax exempt status with the Canadian government.

The Seminary invites inquiries about its programs and services (tapes, study materials, brochures, books). Please request to be put on our regular mailing list, to receive our monthly newsletter and announcements of Seminary publications and events.

Write: Mid-America Reformed Seminary
P.O. Box 163
Orange City, Iowa 51041
U.S.A.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

EVOLUTION AT DORDT

Dear Rev. De Jong:

In the July/August 1987 issue of *THE OUTLOOK*, an article appeared, titled "Evolution at Dordt College," in which you quote from a lecture by Dordt professor Richard Hodgson at Hillsdale College, Hillsdale, Michigan.

It is important for you and your readers to know that Dordt College is opposed to the theory of evolution, declaring in its statement of purpose that "In the beginning, the Bible tells us, God created all things....The creation belongs to God and is under His sovereign rule...." Because of our commitment to the biblical doctrine of creation we were, of course, very disturbed by your report of Professor Hodgson's presentation concerning creation and evolution at the Hillsdale Conference.

This matter was brought to the attention of Dordt's Board of Trustees, which appointed a committee to work with me in dealing with this issue. We (the committee and I, along with other members of the administration) have carried on extensive conversations with Professor Hodgson. As a result of these conversations we were able to formulate a statement which we placed before the Board of Trustees. The Board, after some revisions, adopted the statement which reads as follows:

"The Dordt College Board of Trustees, through a duly appointed committee, has met with Professor Richard Hodgson and discussed with him the views he expressed concerning creation and evolution in a conference held at Hillsdale College, Hillsdale, Michigan on April 10, 1987.

"Professor Hodgson has acknowledged,

with great sorrow and regret, that he failed to make his position clear and, at many points, spoke in such a manner as to give the impression that he favored an evolutionary interpretation of the origin of the world and mankind.

"When asked how he could have been so greatly misunderstood, Professor Hodgson responded by pointing out that the format of the meeting was a debate between himself and Dr. Duane Gish from the Institute for Creation Research in San Diego, California. Since Dr. Gish was presenting the view of "recent creationism," Professor Hodgson was asked to present other views of origins along with the reasoning upon which these views were based.

"When asked to state his own position, which he will do in greater detail elsewhere, Professor Hodgson declared that he acknowledges that God is the Creator of the World and of mankind, and that he rejects both evolution and theistic evolution. He further indicated that it is his constant desire to teach only in harmony with the Word of God and Reformed confessions.

"On the Basis of our inquiries up to this point, while we remain very concerned about the impressions left at the Hillsdale Conference, we believe that we are justified in retaining Professor Hodgson as a member of the faculty of Dordt College."

We have also asked Professor Hodgson to state his own position — explaining from his point of view what happened at the Hillsdale Conference. This statement is enclosed.*

Again, I trust that Dordt's commitment to the biblical doctrine of creation is clear. I trust also that the above demonstrates our concern to deal forthrightly with scientific issues, but always in light of the Word of God as interpreted in the Reformed confessions.

Sincerely,

J.B. Hulst
President

*Editor's note: the gist of Professor Hodgson's 9-page "Explanation", which was too long for us to include here, is indicated in the Board's decision. The above letter was followed by another, which we gladly relay to our readers.

Dear Rev. De Jong:
The Dordt College Board of Trustees met

on September 10 and 11, 1987. At this meeting a statement was adopted as an addendum to the earlier pronouncement of the Board concerning the position of Professor Richard G. Hodgson regarding creation and evolution.

The statement is as follows:

"We have addressed the problem which developed because of Professor Hodgson's presentation at the Hillsdale Conference (April 10, 1987). However, because we remain troubled by statements made at the Conference which could be reflected in his instruction of our students, we, the Dordt College Board of Trustees, have decided to appoint a committee to study and evaluate further Professor Hodgson's position regarding creation and evolution. We do this because we must assure ourselves that the teaching of Professor Hodgson is fully in harmony with the Word of God as interpreted in the Reformed confessions."

I would appreciate it if you would print this along with the material which was previously sent to you.

Sincerely,

J.B. Hulst
President

C. VAN TIL ON THEONOMY
("Augustine-Calvin-Van Til" in July-Aug.
OUTLOOK)

Dear Sir,

As rather close friends of Dr. Van Til since 1952 we have been privileged to hear his views on many things. We knew, for instance, the great respect he had for Dr. Bahnsen's grasp of philosophy, but we also knew that he emphatically disagreed with his "foolishness of theonomy."

He did indeed wish that Dr. Bahnsen could take his place at Westminster, but his opinion, expressed with regret six years ago to his pastor, Stephen Miller, was that he came to have reservations about that because of his theonomic views.

Mr. Schlissel's article in the *OUTLOOK* gives the erroneous impression that Dr. Bahnsen with his theonomic views was Dr. Van Til's choice to succeed himself. It was not.

Sincerely,

Alice Zebley
180 Camp Hill Rd.
Fort Washington, PA 19034

A LOOK AT BOOKS

THE RECKONING, by David Halberstam. Published by Wm. Morrow and Co., New York, NY, 1986, 750 pp., paperback edition by Avon Books, 1987, \$5.50. Review by editor.

This is the epic story of the automobile industry (possibly the best yet written) from the beginning to the present. To me, intrigued with cars since childhood, and from the age of 12 beginning a half dozen years of working on them after school, Saturdays and summers, it had extra fascination. But for the general reader, the story, exceptionally well-told, full of personal interest and drama, sheds a unique light on the problems, plight and threatened future of one of the leaders in U.S. industry and trade in today's competitive world.

In 1973 Charley Maxwell tried to forewarn the U.S. auto companies of a coming oil crunch, but none of the big three would listen. The Detroit executives had become fat and lazy and more concerned with profits than with the quality of their products.

The author singled out Ford for special attention in two chapters, one devoted to Henry Ford "The Founder," and his pioneer achievement, the other to him as "The Destroyer." There is a grim account of how, after he had destroyed his son, only the resolute intervention of his wife and daughter-in-law prevented him from subjecting his grandson to the same arbitrary and fatal interference of an erratic father, spoiled by wealth and power.

We are taken to Japan, devastated by a lost war, under MacArthur's government, beginning to rebuild its ruined industries, to follow its timid efforts to produce automobiles and then its feelers toward a possible export of them. That development was by no means free from internal personal conflicts, but it did eventuate in a union and management cooperation that was opposite to our pattern which cast them as antagonists.

The U.S. story describes various personalities and their roles. It would be hard to find a greater contrast than that between Henry Ford I who once fired the whole book-keeping department as unproductive and Robert McNamara, one of the new "Whiz Kids," who was almost totally preoccupied with figures. In the growing international competition, the Japanese product came to obviously outstrip that of the U.S. Executive Hal Sperlick, visiting a Japanese factory in the early 70s, saw no repair bays beside the assembly line, and asked, "Where do you repair your cars?" We don't have to repair our cars," was the answer. "Where are your inspectors?" he asked. "The workers are the inspectors," was his answer, and he thought of U.S. repair

bins the size of football fields! Doing the job right the first time was calculated to reduce the cost about 25%—which was close to the price advantage of the Japanese (pp. 734, 735).

The most impressive of the author's observations may be those with which he concludes his long story. After detailing some U.S. comparative advantages in world competition, he lists "two real weaknesses." "One was the public school system and the low level of literacy. (A recent study said in its conclusion that if a foreign power had wanted to undermine the United States of America, it would have given it the public school system it currently had.)" Where formerly in one of the best schools children of Jewish immigrants had been the top graduates, now these were Asian immigrants. This spoke of U.S. opportunity, but also showed that "too many native sons and daughters had taken their standard of living for granted." "The other respect in which America was ill prepared for the new world economy was in terms of expectations. No country, including America, was likely ever to be as rich as America had been from 1945 to 1975, and other nations were following the Japanese into middle-class existence, which meant that life for most Americans was bound to become leaner. But in the middle of 1986 there seemed little awareness of this, let alone concern about it. Few were discussing how best to adjust the nation to an age of somewhat diminished expectations, or how to marshal its abundant resources for survival in a harsh, unforgiving new world, or how to spread the inevitable sacrifices equitably."

Although this book is not written from a Christian perspective, it is a dramatic demonstration of Herbert Schlossberg's thesis in his monumental 1983 *IDOLS FOR DESTRUCTION* (cf. Hosea 8:4) that, in the Lord's management and judgment of human affairs, the idols that people make become their appropriate destroyers. Whether or not this is Mr. Halberstam's perspective, his well-researched story bristles with examples of individuals, industries and whole nations faced with that kind of "reckoning."

THE SUICIDE OF THE WEST

By James Burnham. Published by Regnery Press, Chicago Illinois. Reviewed by John H. Sietsema.

With a scalpel-like logic James Burnham probes and dissects the philosophy and mind set of the liberal. He does so because he sees the flaws and weaknesses inherent in the liberal's system of thought are leading western civilization to commit virtual suicide.

You and I are part of the western civilization, and as Christians we know that it is our civilization that has been influenced most by Christianity and that has been instrumental in the spread of the Gospel to other areas beyond our own civilization.

Burnham validates his claim that western civilization is on the path of suicide by simply studying the global map. Since 1918 the Western World has been shrinking in actual land mass. Too, its cultural and political influence in realms beyond its own boundaries has declined. And wherever the West has vacated, be it in land mass or in cultural and political influence, communism has replaced it: in Eastern Europe, Southeastern Asia, China, Cuba, Nicaragua, and great parts of Africa.

A chief flaw in liberal thinking is its view of men. Liberals deny original sin and thus never regard man as indeed a sinful being. Borrowing from the thinkers of the Enlightenment Age, liberals believe man is perfectible and wholly capable of attaining the golden age for man.

If there is evil in man, it is simply extrinsic to his being much like a golf ball lodged in a man's stomach. The golf ball is not an integral part of the man's physical being. The evil is there only because of bad institutions, hostile environment, and sheer ignorance. Correct, or if it needs be, eliminate these institutions, so that many may become good. Thus, the liberal, unlike the conservative, places no abiding value on either the family, the state, the church, or traditions. If anyone of these stand in the way of the perfecting of man, let it be cast aside like a tattered garment that has outlived its usefulness.

Ignorance, a cardinal evil in the liberal's eye, is to be overcome by universal education—an education pursued solely along the lines of scientific, empirical inquiry. This means religious education must be eventually thrust aside, since it is too much founded on tradition, custom, and religious principles.

Also, for the liberal universal education must remove all differences, inequalities, and discriminations whether they arise from racial, social, economic, or ethnic causes. Equality of men in all their relationships is the goal of the liberal mind.

Peace is the ultimate priority of the liberal, superceding those of freedom, justice, and liberty (national sovereignty). This mind set thus explains why the liberal mind has been so willing to negotiate and collaborate with communistic powers like Russia. He naively believes that communists can be trusted to negotiate and compromise in good faith, even though the record plainly shows that the communists have repeatedly broken agreements when it serves their goal of achieving world domination.

Within our own land the liberal philosophy has wrought great harm to our educational system and jurisprudence. Progressive education with its advocacy of permissiveness has turned out undisciplined graduates who are caught up in drugs, sexual license, and utter disregard for property. Our jurisprudence system with its errant view of crime and criminals has resulted in repeat offenders and in an increase of crime.

The author feels the basic flaw in liberalism is that it has jelled into an ideology. An ideology is a systematic and self-contained set of ideas which takes over-riding precedence over practical experience and reality, and so all conceivable evidence that may run counter to it is explained away. Because the liberal refuses to let his doctrine be tempered and modified by actual empirical conditions, his programs and policies, when enacted, often flounder and fail miserably. Perhaps the Great Society envisioned by the late President Johnson is an example of a failed idea.

However, the greatest tragedy of liberalism is that communism, which is to its left, simply carries the liberal's principles to their logical and practical extremes: acceptance of secularism, abandonment of traditions, and customs, even those nurtured and developed by the Christian faith, and boundless faith in science. Too often communism has allowed liberalism to run ahead of it in the political realm so as to facilitate its own eventual takeover.

Burnhams' book is the trumpet's alarm to alert us who cherish our Christian faith and appreciate our nation. For both our Christian faith and our nation are gravely imperilled if the liberal policies and decision-making in places of authority (government, education, and churches) are not checked.

A WORD FOR TODAY AND TOMORROW

LEST WE FORGET: A PERSONAL REFLECTION ON THE FORMATION OF THE ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, by Robert K. Churchill. Published by the OPC Historian's Committee, P.O. Box 48, Coraopolis, PA 15108. Paper, 135pp. Price \$3.00 (includes postage and handling). Review by the Editor.

Have you ever known a minister who organized a creative writing class in his church? This was Robert King Churchill, a unique and extraordinarily interesting personality in the history of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, which has been celebrating its 50th anniversary. He occasionally dropped in, in Seattle, where his visit might take us to the nearby U. of Washington, his alma mater, and the conversation might run in a variety of unexpected directions, from some recent Christian novel to the state of the church and nation. He was a rare combination of formidable ability in philosophical argument with the temperament of an artist and poet. When he died Sept. 20, 1980 he left 2 unfinished manuscripts, one, a history of his denomination, the other, an autobiography. Putting them together became the responsibility of Rev. George E. Haney. The result is a gripping little book that combines the vitality of a life story with unique insights on events that concerned the fundamentals of the Christian faith, expressed by an artist of the English language.

The story begins with a visit to and memories of the old First Presbyterian Church of Tacoma, Washington, where he as an 18 year old, first heard the gospel and was converted, where he met his wife, Dorothy, and heard the call to the gospel ministry. (The wedding date already set was postponed seven years while he, a grade-school dropout, reluctantly went back to school.) He wrote the moving story of the Holy Spirit's work through Dr. C.W. Weyer in that great church and then through the Seattle pastor, Dr. Mark A. Matthews who was said to have "made Seattle presbyterian" in his 8,000-member congrega-

tion with 27 branch Sunday Schools. Despite the thrilling labors of those great defenders of the faith against attacking liberalism, Churchill saw the high promise of those congregations undercut and weakened by an incoming dispensationalism. That misguided movement brought division and confusion to these big evangelical congregations that were not being adequately taught the Biblical doctrines of the creeds. Through personal struggle, Bob came to exchange the dispensational shrinking of the gospel for the vast Biblical vision of the "whole counsel of God" with its teaching of one great covenant of grace fulfilled in one Old and New Testament church.

Already registered to attend the dispensational Dallas Theological Seminary, he, at the advice of a new pastor, and becoming uneasy about dispensationalism, turned to Westminster instead. There he learned from Machen and Van Til to appreciate the wholeness of the gospel. This too was a corrective to his university training where he had "walked this dry philosophical riverbed" in which "training in science and philosophy was always attempting to elbow God out of his universe" (p. 57). At Westminster, in what "some would call a second conversion" to Calvinism (p. 47), he "came to realize the greatness of the God of the Bible, and that the Bible is indeed God's self-revelation. Gradually, and in diverse ways, the doctrine of God dawned upon my soul like a cloudless morning. A reluctant assent gave way to the world-and-life view of the Reformed faith. My horizons were expanded...I love those infinitudes that beckon the soul in the so-called Calvinistic theology" (which he explained really meant "biblical Christianity").

At this school he became immersed in the church battle around the "Westminster Movement." Led by Dr. Machen, this group held that the big presbyterian church "could not exist only half-loyal to the word of God... Christendom could not endure on a foundation consisting of the true gospel mixed with 'another gospel.'" Because of this uncompromising stance, the liberals were determined to destroy it. The liberals' method of trying to change the church doctrines "was dishonest, perhaps even diabolical" (p. 63). They appealed first for "tolerance," but on gaining the upper hand, they compelled "those who stood for the old faith...to pay tribute or leave." In their "Auburn Affirmation," they held that "while facts of the gospel are given by God in Scripture, the interpretation of those facts is determined by man."

Thus, a professor can encourage "his class to doubt many things in the Bible and the Christian faith," and reassure objecting students by saying, "It all depends on your interpretation. Your pastor interprets it one way. I interpret it another way" (p. 67). The Auburn Affirmation dismissed fundamental Christian doctrines as mere "theories" Machen pointed out that this liberalism was really "a different religion" from Christianity.

The account graphically describes the way in which Machen and his followers had to oppose this liberal perversion of the gospel in the church missions. Rather than support missionaries that contradicted the gospel, they were driven to establish an independent board of mission, with Machen as president. For this, Machen was brought to trial. In that process any questioning of the acts of the Assembly and any appeal to the Bible were ruled out of order, as he was even denied the opportunity to make a defense and was suspended from office (pp. 96, 97). Thus Churchill's vivid first-hand account introduces the beginnings and the early struggles of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. It is a story not only full of interest, but one that, most importantly, describes (and sometimes perhaps anticipates) many of the same kind of developments that increasingly trouble us in our own churches and denomination. This is an excellent (and bargain) book to help us get ready to understand and prepare to meet them. It ought to be in our libraries and homes.

Two other O. P. Church Anniversary volumes have been published by and are available from the committee mentioned at the head of this review. The **ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH: 1936-1986**, edited by Charles G. Dennison, is a 358-page hardbound collection of materials about the churches, the denomination and the ministers, priced at \$10.00 (including postage). **PRESSING TOWARD THE MARK**, edited by Charles G. Dennison and Richard C. Gamble, is a 490-page hardbound collection of 30 essays on various issues and events in the church's history, priced at \$15.00 (postpaid). Referred to in an article by Steven M. Schlissel in our April 1987 **OUTLOOK**, it contains valuable materials on a wide variety of subjects which invite study and a 24-page bibliography of Machen's writings.

For the general reader, Churchill's lively little book should have the broadest appeal and can be highly recommended. May it find a place in many homes and churches.