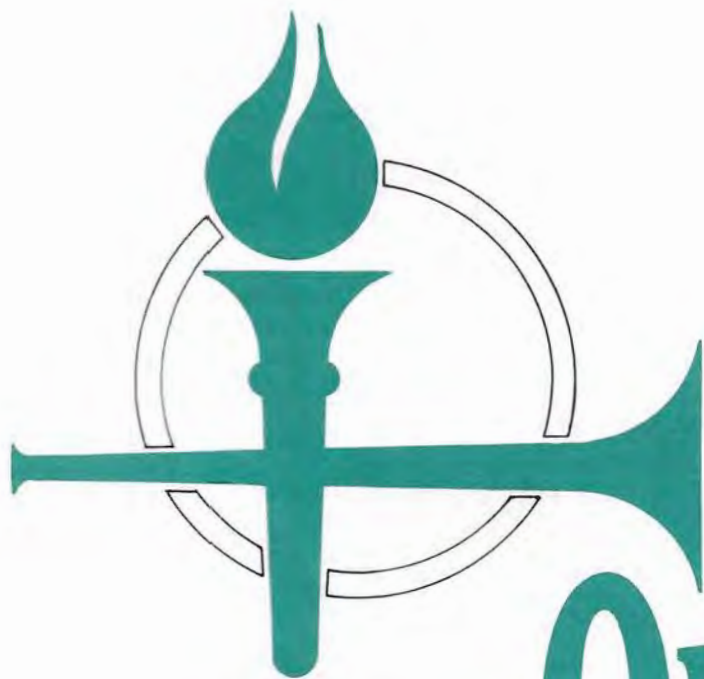




Outlook

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and defense of the
reformed faith*

The World Alliance

CRC Synod Agenda

Protecting Professors?

THE MOST EXCELLENT WAY

"And now I will show you the most excellent way" (I Cor. 13a).

• • • • •

These are words of Paul. Perhaps we wouldn't expect this, thinking of Paul as the man of theology, the great predestinarian, and of John as the apostle of love. Paul here says that love is the greatest Christian exercise. John does not have a monopoly on love, any more than Paul has one on theology.

Every Christian is to possess and exercise love. This is fundamental for all of us, because without it nothing else is of spiritual value.

Love is not the basis of our salvation. Neither may we say, with the liberals, that love is the heart of salvation and Christianity, with Christ as only our example. The heart of salvation is Jesus Christ, first of all through His atonement on Calvary. By faith, the gift of the Spirit, we can and do lay hold of Christ. The result of this faith is that we are justified and are given the fruits of the Spirit, of which the greatest is love. In Galatians Paul speaks of the fruits of the Spirit, mentioning the first as love.

By its fruits you can know the tree, says Jesus. Here Paul emphasizes the need of love as the greatest of these gifts of the Spirit. This implies that without the Spirit no one can have that love; no unregenerate person possesses it; only those who are in Christ have it.

Love is the fulfillment of the law. Hundreds of times most of us have heard from the pulpit that keeping the law means that we love God above all and our neighbor as ourselves. Paul has in mind the second table, for in chapter 13 he speaks only of love regarding the neighbor.

If love is the greatest of the beautiful gifts of the Spirit, hatred is its opposite. Hatred tears apart, as the work of the devil. Love builds up, and unites. Because heaven is the place of perfection, we may be assured that in heaven we will taste and experience love as we have never known it in this life. How glorious that will be!

• • • • •

Love is "the most excellent way," says Paul. More excellent than what? What does it surpass, so that it is the greatest spiritual exercise? The answer to this question is in the last part of the previous chapter. There Paul speaks of the special gifts in the church of Christ at that time, gifts of prophecy and teaching, of working miracles and speaking in tongues. We believe that these special gifts were given until the revelation of the Lord was complete. We have the complete Scriptures today. Therefore these gifts are no longer given, as we no longer need them.

In the church at Corinth, some people possessed these special gifts. Paul encouraged the congregation to exercise them and to eagerly desire

John Blankespoor

the greater gifts. Then he said, "And now I will show you the most excellent way." He would speak about something that far surpassed these special gifts. That was love.

Try to imagine what this meant for the Corinthian Christians. There must have been people amongst them with various illnesses, such as cancer, leprosy and other incurable diseases. And the workers of miracles perhaps healed some of them. How the people must have praised these workers of miracles!

Imagine how church members having such special gifts of miracles and healing would be praised today. "No," says Paul. I will show you something much greater, something that far surpasses all such special gifts. It is the gift and exercise of love.

• • • • •

Someone might say that all this is only imaginary. We no longer have such spiritual gifts. True, but we have people in the church with other kinds of gifts. There are members in special offices, pastors, missionaries, elders, deacons and evangelists. Remember the many dedicated Christian teachers and other willing and able workers. Every church has gifted members to lead, teach, pray, and who have extraordinary knowledge of the Bible and good memories too! Paul says that all should desire the greatest gifts, should aspire to have and do more. But he also says, "I am going to show

you something that far exceeds what these specially gifted people may have. That is the exercise of love."

This any and every Christian can have, by the grace of God, through the use of His Word and prayer.

.....

The 13th chapter of I Corinthians (v. 1-3) teaches us that love must be the motive of all Christians' actions.

"If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge and if I have faith that can remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing."

Speaking in the superlative, Paul brings up things that are hardly imaginable. I can hardly conceive of a rich person giving all he has and then, in persecution, giving his body to be burned. Even if one would do this, without love it would mean nothing to the Lord.

This extreme praise of love incites all of us to examine our own deeds and actions, even the best of them, and ask how much we have done only out of love? Or conversely, how much we do with ulterior motives.

Vv. 4-7 characterize love. "Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil, but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres."

Let each Christian examine himself if he exercises this kind of love. This is the kind of Christian living that is pleasing to the Lord. More than anything else in the area of special abilities and gifts.

Surely this also implies that there may be some (hopefully many) members in the congregation whose names do not appear on the bulletin, who are not very popular and don't receive much extra recognition, who nevertheless actively love. They are performing acts of love behind the scenes, may be much in prayer and giving the widow's mite. They may be common lay members of the



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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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church. But they try to live with this kind of love. And in God's sight they may be greater and more blessed than some pastors, council members and even professors of theology.

How differently the Lord sees things and people than we do.

• • • • •

No Christian can be indifferent to anything of such magnitude. Neither will any Christian try to do so, with something that is so great before the Lord. He is bound to ask the question, Why don't I have more of this kind of love, and why is my love

usually so weak and why are most of my deeds so selfish? And how can I have more of this real love?

We must see and remember first that God Himself is the God of love, the lovable God. He is love. Of course, His reaction to sin is wrath. But in Himself He is the God of love. And He sent His Son into the world, because He loved His own from eternity, even before He laid the foundations of the world. What a deed and sacrifice of love, for Christ to come into this world of hatred, the "world of the devil." This Christ, we must know if we are to have and be able to exercise this true love.

We must know Christ, personally, intellectually and experientially. (When we do know Him we must realize again and again, that it was not because of anything in us that He saves us. His love alone is the reason.) And even when we have known Him for years we do well to ask the question, why do I still love self so much? How much am I living and acting with true knowledge of this wonderful Jesus, our Savior? How much of His love is a flame within, by the power of the Spirit?

O Holy Spirit kindle ever more that flame of God's love in us.

DELEGATES AND OVERTURES

Henry Vander Karr

Soon the Synod of 1988 will convene. Delegates have been elected by all of the 42 Classes and these delegates will have a busy schedule and a grave responsibility when they meet in Synod. No doubt there will be many overtures as well as reports to be handled by the delegates.

A delegate to our broadest assembly must recognize the responsible task to which he has been called but he must also realize his proper position in this assembly. I am afraid that this is not always the case.

I hear that prospective delegates have been asked by members of some Classes where they stood on a given issue coming before Synod. It seems as though there were always some members of Classes who thought such questions to be improper. The delegates should listen to the debate and so form their

opinion at Synod and not come with pre-conceived notions. In the main I would agree with this. If the Classes are to tell the delegates how to vote on every issue, they might as well send robots.

However, it is quite a different matter when the delegating Classis has an overture on a specific matter coming before Synod. The delegate must remember that he *represents* his Classis and not himself! Is this not a truism? I think so; but it must be emphasized in the light of what has happened at some recent Synods.

Webster says to delegate means "to send with a commission, depute. One sent and empowered to act for another, a deputy; a representative." This means that the Classis may expect its delegates to vote for and defend the overture it has sent to Synod. Should there be delegates

who do not wish to state where they stand on the issue which their Classis is bringing to Synod, such a Classis better elect new delegates while there is still time.

Many of the members of the church are becoming disillusioned with the process of sending overtures to Synod. They claim it does no good. There is an element of truth in that disillusioned statement. This is just another reason why the idea of delegation should be clearly understood. The ecclesiastical process should be kept in honor.

There have been two examples of the breakdown of the ecclesiastical process in recent years. The Synod of 1985 had overtures from thirteen Classes against the decision of the 1984 Synod concerning Women in Office. Besides these 13 overtures there were more than 35 from consis-

tories which did not have the opportunity to bring this matter to their Classes. What did Synod do? It scarcely gave all these overtures a second look! That is not the way to gain the confidence of our people.

The Synod of 1987 had 20 overtures which were unfavorable to the idea of "Vision 21." These 20 Classes' delegates should have come with 80 votes against the proposed

plan. I know that this was not a majority because there are 42 Classes in the denomination. Does anyone mean to say that there were not five votes from all the delegates of Classes who had *not* sent overtures regarding this matter to Synod who were not in favor of the proposal? I doubt it. Seldom has the church sent so many overtures on

any one matter to Synod. Yet, in principle it passed!

If the delegates do not realize their rightful responsibility to the Classis which sent them, the Synod will become more and more hierarchical.

Rev. Henry Vander Kam is a retired CRC pastor at Orange City, Iowa.

Arthur Besteman

TIME TO WAKE UP

Not long ago a friend received a letter from a kinsman who is a pastor in the Gereformeerde Kerken Nederland. The Dutch pastor who serves a large congregation in a metropolitan area wrote that those who are questioning the historicity of the Bible are no longer restricting their attacks to the opening chapters of Genesis but are now calling into question the entire Word. Although such news is alarming we need not be surprised. To call into question the integrity of any one part of Scripture will eventually result in undermining the authority of all of Scripture. That is why the present situation in the Christian Reformed Church is such a serious one.

It is a well known fact that Professor John Stek has had problems with the historicity of the opening chapters of Genesis. The April 12, 1987 issue of the *Grand Rapids Press* reports Dr. John Kromminga as saying that the Board of Trustees of Calvin College and Seminary after investigating Rev. Stek's position gave him "a very mild slap on the hand." Professor Stek himself is quoted in

the same article as saying, "Depending on who you talk to, I was given a reprimand or a vote of confidence."

Dr. Howard Van Till of Calvin College in his book *The Fourth Day* has described the opening chapters of Genesis as "primeval history" not to be taken literally. Now the committee appointed to study the views of Dr. Van Till along with those of two of his colleagues has presented its report which was adopted by the board of trustees in their winter meeting in February. We hear the board saying that the views of Dr. Van Till "fall within the limits set by our denomination's guidelines for how to interpret the Bible." Dr. Van Till is commended along with his colleagues for "their deep devotion to Christ and their diligence in subjecting their work to His service."

I can't help but recall the visit of Dr. Harry Kuitert to Grand Rapids almost thirty years ago. The Dutch scholar addressed a group of ministers and students gathered on the Franklin Street campus of Calvin College. Dr. Kuitert acknowledged freely that he had problems with the

opening chapters of Genesis and their historicity. But said although you may question the opening chapters of Genesis you may not question the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Thirty years have passed and those who have followed events in the Netherlands know that not only the opening chapters of Genesis are being questioned but also the vicarious atonement and the meaning of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. And that should not surprise us because if Genesis 1 may be questioned, why not John 3 and Luke 24?

We are told that Professor Van Till is deeply committed to Jesus Christ and that is not to be questioned. But then who was to question the sincerity of Dr. Kuitert thirty years ago when he said that the resurrection of Jesus Christ was not to be questioned? A person's sincerity is not the question before us at the present time. The question is rather, where will Professor Van Till's position lead him or the students who sit in his classroom or those who read his book? How long will it take before the historicity of one of the

great events of redemptive history is questioned? And then what will the church's reaction be? Just a few years ago Professor Stek received a "mild slap on the hand." At most the Board of Trustees of Calvin College shook a finger at Professor Van Till as they encouraged him "to be as clear and complete in the future as he can be with regard to these issues

so that the church will not be needlessly disturbed." The church is becoming accustomed to a view of Scripture which calls into question the historicity of its teachings. And where will that lead us? How long will it be before we find ourselves without the Gospel?

When will the Christian Reformed Church wake up and learn from the

experience of other churches? The Dutch pastor wrote my friend, "Now the entire Word is under question." Don't we see the same thing happening in our church? We must wake up before it is too late!

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WHOSE WORD MUST WE ACCEPT?

Al Mennega

Do we accept God's inscripturated Word, or do we accept the word of science about the ultimate origin of man, the world and the cosmos? That is the basic dilemma we face as Christians in the secular world. We have to make a clear, well-thought-through choice regarding which way to go. We have come to a fork in the road and we can not travel both roads that lie before us. One road is that of supernaturalism, which says that God created the world and man supernaturally by the Word of His power. The other road is that of naturalism, which says that the universe and man developed by natural means, without God's special intervention. It is obvious that these two cannot be reconciled. Scripture does not allow for a mechanistic development of the universe, and secular scientists do not allow for any supernatural events. That the two cannot be reconciled, Abraham Kuyper saw clearly, and in his *Evolution Address* of 1898 he strongly denounced any attempt to create a

synthesis of biblical teaching and evolutionist dogma.

Some people think that "when science says so it must be true." That sounds good, of course. But what does it mean when we say that "science says so"? First of all, science does not say anything at all. Science is an *activity* which some people engage in. So it is the scientists who do the saying. And it is only *some* scientists that say certain things about particular subjects. Who are these scientists? Sometimes they are atheists and sometimes they are Christians. Therefore, a better question to ask would be whether a certain thing is truly scientific: not whether some or most scientists believe it, but whether it can be demonstrated to be correct and true. If it is truly scientific, i.e., true to what is actually in the world around us, there can be no conflict with what God says in Scripture. Truly scientific theories, therefore, are never in conflict with God's Word and we never have to worry about those.

When we look at the currently popular secular theory of the origin of the universe, called the "Big Bang" theory, are we dealing with something truly "scientific"? Can the Big Bang theory be demonstrated to be in accord with what we actually *know* about our universe? And the answer is NO. It is not scientific, even though it is held by many scientists, even some in our Reformed circles. This theory could be true only if the assumptions were correct. But certainly the assumption is false that the slogan "the present is the key to the past" would also hold for ultimate origins. It surely does not agree with the scriptural teachings which indicate that God supernaturally and discontinuously called certain things into being. The concept that God would initiate the universe by means of the Big Bang and then let it develop mechanistically, strictly according to the laws of nature, is totally foreign to and incompatible with the scriptural concept of the divine Creator calling

things into being. Only if the development of the universe were strictly mechanistic could the Big Bang theory be correct, since it is by the knowledge of the laws of nature that the possibility of the Big Bang event is calculated. Anything supernatural at all in the development of the universe would throw off your calculations and prove your reasoning faulty.

Is there not an element of arrogance in pretending that throughout the centuries nobody has been able to understand what God was trying to get across to people, until just recently when at last "science" (i.e., secular scientists and those Christians who jumped on the bandwagon) had got it all straight through scientific studies? Would our modern scientists be able to do what they think God could not do, i.e., to explain adequately how this universe came into being? No way! Just remember what God answered Job!

I do not think that the classical way of interpreting the early Genesis chapters creates any necessary conflict with the real facts that we see in the created structures around us. When God speaks of creating this world in six days, the Hebrews at Mount Sinai understood days as we understand them today. The all-knowing and all-wise Jehovah God surely knows how to communicate with His people. I have difficulty thinking that God would lead us into thinking of 24-hour days if they really had been long periods of millions and billions of years. God is a God of truth and He does not mislead.

While God's testimony is fully reliable, we can not say the same for the testimony of men, not even if they are scientists. As scientists we try to be objective and truthful, but often we do not succeed.

A major problem arises when we do not start our theorizing with Scripture as our basis. Only God's Word can give us the true picture of what happened at the very beginning. No human being was present during the creation week until Adam appeared. So we can know something about the creation week only on the basis of what God has revealed. Then we put our data of science into that biblical context and develop our scientific disciplines. But if we start with the

secular framework and its suppositions, and build our theories and science on them, then we will have difficulty squaring what God says about the universe and its beginnings. The question then is whether God's infallible Word will be our final authority or whether it will be the words of secular scientists. Remember that "science" does not say anything. It is the scientist who is making the claims. The data do speak, and we have to accept those data, those things that are truly facts. But men's words we have to weigh very carefully, lest we forget whose authority is supreme.

We can apply this to a question which is becoming more current among us. Not everyone in our Reformed circles believes that Adam was created supernaturally by God as described in Genesis. Some entertain doubts and play with theoretic possibilities of man evolving from the big apes, supposing "dust" could mean some form of animal life. But as a Biologist I find not a shred of scientific evidence to support such an hypothesis. In fact, the evidence

seems to be strictly against it. And it appears that such an approach is poor theology as well, since Scripture gives no hint at such ideas. In order to make it sound acceptable at all, you would have to twist Scripture considerably and go through some impressive mental gymnastics. But above all such travesty denies the authority and superiority of Scripture. We believe in the perspicuity of Scripture. Believers *can* understand what God is saying to them. We do not need the scientific elite to understand God's Word, whether they are theologians, geologists, or any other kind of scientists.

On whose Word will we rely? We have to make the basic choice between God's Word and men's words. There is no middle way. You cannot have it both ways. There is only one right choice. It has to be God's Word.

Dr. Al Mennega is Professor of Biology at Dordt College, Sioux Center, Iowa.

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REFLECTIONS ON THE REPORT

Henry Vanden Heuvel

The Ad Hoc Committee report which was presented to the Board of Trustees of Calvin College and Seminary in February, 1988, has resulted in a strong and forceful reaction. Most of the responses from my point of view have been negative. I believe that a sufficient period of time has elapsed to put some thoughts on paper which would serve as my reflections on the action of the Board.

The committee report was not the same as a synodical report. This committee was an "ad hoc" committee, which simply means that it was appointed by the Board of Trustees of Calvin College to serve the Board with advice relative to the issue at hand. As such, it is not like a synodical committee which serves synod and thus the entire denomination. The report of this committee has not, for example, been printed in the *Agenda* for Synod. At the same time, however, since Calvin College is the college of the Christian Reformed Church, the committee and its report should be open to the entire denomination for its perusal and criticism. This is as it should be.

As the chairman of the committee, I wish to say right at the outset that our committee was comprised of men who were honest and open to the Word of God and the confessions of the church. There was a harmonious relationship that existed among the five members of the com-

mittee. Our task was given by the Board of Trustees with a clear mandate: "To study and evaluate the published statements of Professors Howard Van Till, Clarence Mennenga, and Davis Young on the subject of creation and evolution, including their interpretation of Genesis 1-11 and to determine whether these statements are in accord with the synodically adopted guidelines for the interpretation of Scripture and with the doctrinal statements of the Christian Reformed Church; and to submit formulated recommendations which may serve as answers to the various communications received by the Board."

The Guidelines

What are the "synodically adopted guidelines for the interpretation of Scripture?" We determined that these guidelines are found in the so-called Report 44 which was adopted by Synod in 1972. The pertinent guidelines which apply especially to the matter at hand are these:

d. Synod, acknowledging that Scripture is self-authenticating, reminds the churches that the authority of Scripture is not dependent upon the findings of science. While scientific findings can serve as occasions for a better understanding of Scripture, nevertheless the church must appeal only to the authority of Scripture as the basis for its faith and life,

and accordingly must seek to develop a Christian community within which all scholarly work is carried on in faithfulness to the authoritative Scriptures.

e. Synod instructs the churches to see to it that biblical studies are carried on in a careful and disciplined way, submissively rethinking the thoughts of Scripture itself; and accordingly warns against the use of any method of biblical interpretation which excludes or calls into question either the event-character or the revelational meaning of biblical history, thus compromising the full authority of Scripture as the Word of God (*Acts of Synod 1972*, p. 69).

The guideline which we as a committee felt was applicable to this point at hand was also the statement of Synod 1982,

That Synod declare that adherences to the confessions, as required by the Form of Subscription, includes those utterances of the confession that affirm the historical factuality of the events recorded in Genesis 1-3, and that departures from those doctrines must be dealt with in terms of the requirements of that form (*Acts of Synod 1982*, p. 107).

In the light of these guidelines, together with the doctrinal statements of the Christian Reformed Church, how are these three professors to be judged? Are they in ac-

cord with the positions stated in the guidelines and confessions?

The Committee's Conclusions

Our committee met with each of the three professors many times during this past year. We interviewed them regarding the published statements which as far as Van Till and Young were concerned, were found in their books, and as far as Mennenga was concerned, was found in many articles in various periodicals. These interviews were very helpful. What began to emerge from these contacts was that we were dealing with men who are devout Christians. We found them to be in no way out to destroy the church, or to destroy the faith of the students under them.

Our committee verified that all three professors wholeheartedly agree with the following confessional statements and consider it their privilege and calling to teach their respective sciences in harmony with them:

Belgic Confession Article II.

We know Him by two means: First, by the creation, preservation and government of the universe; which is before our eyes as a most elegant book, wherein all creatures, great and small, are as so many characters leading us to see clearly the invisible things of God, even his everlasting power and divinity, as the apostle Paul says (Rom. 1:20). All which things are sufficient to convince men and leave them without excuse. Second, he makes himself more clearly and fully known to us by his holy and divine Word, that is to say, as far as is necessary for us to know in this life, to his glory and our salvation.

Belgic Confession Article XII.

We believe that the Father by the Word, that is, by His Son, has created of nothing the heaven, the earth, and all creatures, when it seemed good unto him, giving unto every creature its being, shape, form, and several offices to serve its Creator; that he also still upholds and governs them by his eternal providence and infinite power for the service of mankind, to the end that man may serve his God.

Belgic Confession Article XIV.

We believe that God created man out of the dust of the earth, and made and formed him after his own image and likeness, good, righteous and holy, capable in all things to will agreeably to the will of God. But being in honor, he understood it not, neither knew his excellency, but wilfully subjected himself to sin and consequently to death and the curse, giving ear to the words of the devil.

Whereas the professors wholeheartedly agree with the statements quoted above from the Belgic Confession, we found that especially Professor Howard Van Till did not fully subscribe to the guidelines adopted by synod. His view of Genesis 1-11 as primeval history, for example, falls short of what Synod 1972 prescribes regarding the matter of the event character of biblical history. In the book *The Fourth Day*, Van Till says,

The truth of a concrete story in ancient Hebrew literature does not necessarily lie in its specific details but rather in the eternal verities it illustrates....The stories of primeval history are much more like parables than like journalistic reports of events....Primeval history and parable can both serve as vehicles of truth—important truth. In both cases, the concrete details of the story constitute the packaging in which the truth is conveyed. In both cases, the content of truth is of infinitely greater value than the vehicle or packaging in which it is carried....Unlike parables, primeval history does refer to an historical past with a character essentially the same as that illustrated by the narrative....Though it (primeval history) is not to be taken literally, it is to be taken seriously (p. 83).

Van Till is open to criticism precisely on the point that Synod 1972 clearly prescribes. Synod warned "against the use of any method of biblical interpretation which excludes or calls into question either the event-character or the revelational meaning of biblical history, thus compromising the full authority of Scripture as the Word of God" (*Acts of Synod 1972*, p. 69). When Van Till says that these opening chapters of Genesis "are not to

be taken literally," though they are to be taken seriously, he is using a method of interpretation which calls into question the event character of these chapters. The report of the ad hoc committee called the attention of the Board of Trustees to this fact. The committee states,

Our concern, then, with Van Till's *genre* of primeval history is that this method of Biblical interpretation could lead to conclusions which would call into question the event character of the history in these early chapters. It has not led him to unacceptable conclusions in regard to the stellar creation, but we urge him to refine his method of Biblical interpretation so that if it is applied particularly to chapters 2-11 of Genesis, it will not exclude or call into question either the event character or the revelational meaning of Biblical history, thus compromising the full authority of Scripture as the Word of God.

The Board's Actions

The mandate of the Board of Trustees also instructed the committee to come with recommendations which might serve as answers to the various communications received by the Board. The Board adopted the following recommendations presented by the committee:

1. The Board of Trustees receives the report with gratitude and recommends that it refer this report to Professors Clarence Menninga, Howard Van Till, and Davis Young for their study and guidance.
2. That the Board of Trustees declare, based on the study, evaluation, and collegial discussion between the committee and the three faculty members, that the writings of Professors Menninga, Van Till, and Young fall within the limits set by the synodically adopted guidelines for the interpretation of Scripture, and at the same time, the Board reminds the professors of the limitations that these guidelines place upon the interpretation of Scripture.
3. That the Board of Trustees commend these three Professors for their deep personal devotion to

Christ and their diligence in subjecting their scholarship to His service.

4. That the Board of Trustees accept this report as its "recommendations which may serve as answers to the various communications received by the Board."

As I look back at these decisions and recommendations, I believe a better recommendation would have been to state that especially Van Till's position regarding primeval history is not in line with the synodically adopted guidelines for the interpretation of the opening chapters of Genesis and that he be instructed to bring his position more clearly in line with the synodical guidelines. On the one hand, the report is critical of Van Till's position on the basis of synod's guidelines, and on the other hand, the Board states that his posi-

tion falls within the guidelines. It simply does not follow. I believe therefore that it would have been better for the committee and the Board to say that Van Till is not in line with the guidelines. For this is indeed what the report of the committee says.

In conclusion I would like to quote from an article that I wrote in the July/August, 1987 issue of *The Outlook* which shows my own position regarding all these matters.

Hebrews 11:3 says, "By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command SO THAT WHAT IS SEEN WAS NOT MADE OUT OF WHAT WAS VISIBLE." This statement says that what God created, He created out of nothing. What is seen was not made out of what was visible. The theory of evolution

teaches that everything came from pre-existent forms. Following the "Big Bang" everything evolved from what was already visible. Eventually, all evolved from pre-existent material until after billions of years, biological life evolved, and then millions of years later, human life. This evolutionary theory is absolutely and diametrically opposed to what the Bible says....This text puts it as clearly as can be. Ours is either a belief that God formed the universe by His command, or it is the belief that what we see came about from what is visible.

This is still my position today.

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SHALL PROFESSORS BE PROTECTED?

Wayne Leigh

In a recent "Sem'Alum" (a publication of the Calvin Theological Seminary Alumni Association), the editor, Rev. Leonard J. Vander Zee, wrote an editorial entitled "A Layer of Protection." The ones who need a layer of protection are the professors of Calvin College and Seminary. He mentions by name particularly seminary prof. Dr. Henry De Moor and college prof. Dr. Howard Van Till.

These professors need protection from the "libelous practices of some of the unofficial magazines and tabloids associated with our denomination and the letters which some 'concerned people' sent out widely in the denomination...." What were these libelous practices? They were published objections to what some professors did at last year's graduation. Several seminary faculty members wore white carnations in

order to demonstrate their solidarity with women who wanted to be admitted to candidacy in the CRC. These libelous practices also included published objections to the teaching of evolution by Dr. Howard Van Till.

Were these libelous practices? According to my dictionary, libel is "anything that is defamatory or that maliciously or damagingly *misrepresents*" (emphasis mine). So in order to answer my question it must be determined whether these men's actions and teachings have been misrepresented.

Synod has followed the clear teaching of the Lord in the Scriptures by deciding not to permit women to be elders and ministers in the CRC. This stance is our denomination's stance. By their "planned gesture of

solidarity" with these two women, the professors who did so took a public stance which was contrary to our church's stance. They knew they were doing so. Is it libel to say what they did was wrong? Not at all.

Or in the case of Dr. Van Till, he has published a book in which he states that we must take the first chapters of Genesis seriously but not literally. In the opinion of many members of the CRC (most?), this teaching contradicts the affirmation by our own synod that the event character of Genesis 1-11 is to be maintained. Is it libel to publish the fact that one believes Dr. Van Till is wrong and is teaching harmful things? Not at all.

Now, according to Rev. Vander Zee, how are these men to be protected? I will quote from him.

"The libelous practices...must be stopped. Local consistories must do their part, whether in the discipline of members who persist in such practices or the protection of members who are attacked in such a way." There seems to be a one-way street here. The professors are allowed to say whatever they wish and receive consistorial protection. The members of the CRC who are not professors are to be disciplined if their "whims" (as Rev. Vander Zee calls them) do not agree with the professors'.

Is that a biblical approach to righteousness and justice? Clearly not. God is no respecter of persons. Nowhere in His Word does He say that professors shall be allowed an extra measure of "academic freedom." Professors at Calvin College and Seminary are not a "special class" of Christians. Professors are to be held accountable for what they say and do just as much as any other member of the CRC.

Frankly, I am very concerned about the direction in which Rev. Vander Zee suggests we go. If consis-

tories took his admonition seriously, where would freedom of speech be? It would be effectively destroyed. For the only ones among us who would be free to voice their opinions would be professors.

Contrary to Rev. Vander Zee's advice, my advice for professors, ministers and anyone else with public responsibilities would be, "If you can't stand the heat, get out of the kitchen."

Rev. Wayne Leigh is a CRC missionary in Tokyo, Japan.

Marten H. Woudstra

AGAINST THE WORLD ALLIANCE OF REFORMED CHURCHES — FOR BIBLICAL ECUMENISM

This is one of several articles I have written about whether the Christian Reformed Church should ally itself with the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC). It is written upon the editor's request. I do not relish disagreeing so strongly with the members of the Interchurch Relations Committee (IRC) which has been promoting this matter. But the cause of true ecumenism must be given preference over personal feelings of friendship and esteem.

What is WARC?

As its name indicates, WARC considers itself an alliance of *Reformed* churches. Nowhere in its publications, constitution or by-laws is any question raised about the Reformed character of the alliance's members. Yet, as the IRC report frankly admits, the theological opinions of the member churches cover all "theological options." In today's context this means that WARC harbors churches

which tolerate error. It is with these kinds of churches that we are now being asked to "further all endeavors to proclaim the Word of God faithfully, and to order the life and worship of the Church in obedience to the Word" (Constitution art. III, *Agenda*, p. 145).

This is one of the reasons why the Rev. Gerard Bouma, one of IRC's members, dissents from the committee's recommendation. He argues, and rightly so, that "the CRC ought to abstain from membership as long as WARC admits on an equal basis...churches where denial of the faithful proclamation of the Word of God is not militated against, and where denials of some of the most basic and crucial doctrines of Christianity are tolerated" (p. 120).

WARC's watchword has always been inclusivism and tolerance. Marcel Pradervand, long-time General Secretary of WARC, states in his history of the WARC that "the

founders of the Alliance had no narrow Reformed spirit and they were anxious to bring together all Evangelical Christians" (*A Century of Service*, p. 25). What he fails to state is that WARC also harbors churches whose views are anything but evangelical. The chief spokesman for the United Church of Christ, the Rev. Avery Post, said in an interview with the *Grand Rapids Press* of Sept. 20, 1986: "The death knell may have been sounded and some people think American liberal churches are dying. But I don't see it that way. Things don't look gloomy from where I am." The United Church of Christ is one of the "Reformed" churches which will be the CRC's "ally" when we, what God may graciously forbid, join with WARC. This church is one of the US's leading liberal churches. Are we, together with that kind of church, or with the United Church of Canada, going to "proclaim the Word of God

faithfully" and to order the churches' life "in obedience to the Word"? How much wishful thinking can one engage in?

Principle Should Decide

But, the IRC observes, there are so many other churches in WARC and with them we may feel some "kinship." These churches presumably will benefit from our Reformed input, together with that of the Reformed Church in America. This reasoning is pragmatic. It leaves out of account the principle at stake here. What the CRC is asked to do is to join an alliance of allegedly Reformed churches, churches of which the CRC itself says that they belong to, the "circle 2" churches of which the 1944 report on Ecumenicity spoke so well. These are churches that have a Reformed background but have become delinquent either in doctrine or practice. In 1944 the CRC said that we ought to *deal with* these kinds of churches on an individual basis, approaching them in love and patience, without a feeling of superiority or Pharisaism, seeking to correct and restore them.

The IRC, on the other hand, while appealing to the same Report of 1944, proposes that the CRC *join* with these churches, some of whom are delinquent, that we *form an alliance* with them. Now an *alliance* is what the word says. It is a solemn covenant, a league. Those covenanting have common aims and share similar ideals. These they seek to realize in their alliance. But the orthodoxy of the CRC with its clearcut confessions can never share the same ideals as the liberalism of these United Churches.

The Alliance Not a Forum

The IRC makes it appear that the Alliance is really a forum for dialogue. But *dialogue* is not the issue. As far back as 1944 we have been committed to dialogue with all sorts of churches, non-Reformed Reformed churches, Protestant churches that have never been Reformed such as the Baptists, and finally, the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches. A fine ideal, based on sound principles of ecumenism, but never put into practice.

Dialogue is *not* the issue. The issue is that we are asked to become *allies* with churches with which we cannot

be if we are true to our signature under the Form of Subscription. The Alliance demands of its members that they leave everything that is "narrow" or "exclusive" out of the confession (Art. II, p. 145).

Moreover, it says that the member churches of WARC must "recognize that the Reformed tradition is a biblical, evangelical ethos, rather than any narrow and exclusive definition of faith and order."

WARC Restricts Confessional Witness

The IRC has taken note of some of the objections I and others have voiced and in an appendix (pp. 156 ff.) it has sought to counter these objections. The gesture itself is appreciated. I wish it would have been done earlier, in the papers in which I wrote. But there is at least some gain in an attempt to meet the other's mind. However, IRC's explanation of the matter just raised the matter of "ethos" rather than, etc., is baffling, to say the least. The IRC maintains that it is not WARC's purpose to say that the Reformed tradition is *only* ethos and that hence the member churches must reject narrow and exclusive definitions of the faith. (p. 160). I call this a baffling explanation, because my dictionary tells me that the word "rather" means: "preferable from the point of view of wisdom, justice, etc.; more properly, more correctly speaking." In other words, WARC wants us to say that our Reformed tradition, which in a confessional church like the CRC is clearly expressed in the Forms of Unity, is "more properly speaking" an ethos.

Contradiction With Form of Subscription

If I say of an object that it is yellow rather than green I mean to say that one should *not* call this object anything else than yellow. Likewise, the WARC says that the Reformed tradition (read: the Reformed confessions) is an "ethos" and that one should therefore *not* appeal to the confessions' "narrow" and "exclusive" definitions as he seeks to accomplish the Alliance goals together with the other allies. This is completely contradictory to the tenor of the Form of Subscription which calls on all office bearers to diligently teach the Reformed doctrines and to

oppose and refute all that militates against them. If we should ever join WARC we would thus be saying one thing in Grand Rapids, but quite the opposite things in Geneva, where WARC has its headquarters. Such procedure is unworthy of the Christian demand for integrity and a direct attack upon true ecumenism.

Joining WARC Contrary to True Ecumenism

If the CRC should ever enter into this Alliance it would not thereby begin to fulfill its ecumenical task more fully; it would be abandoning and surrendering it. WARC is presently engaged in a large number of ecumenical conversations, with Methodists, Baptists, Lutherans, Disciples of Christ and Roman Catholics. These are the groups with which we should have dialogued since 1944. But we failed to do so. However, WARC, with its hybrid character, doctrinally speaking, and with its insistence on inclusiveness rather than exclusiveness, is no substitute for the ecumenical task which is ours as church of Jesus Christ. Out of compassion for the erring and out of concern for biblical truth, we must stay out of WARC's embrace. It is the highest time we start pursuing the lofty goals of "1944."

The IRC has served the denomination well in certain respects. Its approach to the Dutch and South African churches has generally been helpful and correct. But in this matter, as well as in that of the Reformed Church in America, it is leading the church astray. It is, in effect, seeking to bring the CRC into the mainstream of the ecumenical movement where a confessional church such as the CRC simply cannot be. It should also be remembered that two of the long time members of the IRC, Dr. J. Kromminga and Rev. C. Boomsma, are on record as holding that the CRC could join the World Council of Churches without compromise of principle. Rev. Boomsma is going to defend the IRC position before Synod. He and I are on friendly terms, but in this we are completely opposed.

What Alliances Are For

Contrary to what the IRC is saying and repeating, the idea of "witnessing" to the Reformed Faith as we un-

derstand it is precluded by the very structure of this alliance, or of any alliance for that matter. Allies do not always have to see eye to eye in all things. But the specific purpose for allying oneself with others is not to bring one's allies to reason or to make them alter their views. Rather, it is to fight a common foe or to pursue a common goal. IRC uses the example of the USA allying itself with the USSR in WW II. No poorer example for IRC's position could be chosen. Russia did not ask the USA to tone down its emphasis on the Bill of Rights and the USA did not stipulate that Russia should stop being so narrow or exclusive about its communism. The two simply wanted to get Hitler and his hordes to their knees. An alliance is of that nature. It is not for "witnessing" within.

But WARC asks an initial surrender of doctrinal exclusiveness from its members. And it speaks of common goals which simply are not common between orthodox churches such as the CRC and liberal churches.

Changing The Law With a Case Pending

By adopting the Ecumenical Charter last year the CRC has virtually changed the law while the case was pending. The "law" we had was that of 1944. The case was that of membership in WARC. IRC did not like aspects of that "law," so it rewrote it and had this new law adopted by Synod of 1987. IRC now appeals to the new "law" to argue its case, which it could not have done had the law not been rewritten. This, it seems to me, is a travesty of all

good jurisprudence, which should have no place in the church of God.

No Interest in Churches

Since 1972 the matter of membership in WARC has been before the church. It was placed there by the IRC when it had received two "positive" reports by individuals who had had dealings with WARC. Neither of the two expressed themselves on the question of membership (*Acts* 1972, p. 291). The initiative has come entirely from IRC. From 1972 to 1980 it mentioned this matter annually in its report; there was not a single individual, consistory or classis that demanded action. This deafening silence was getting too much for the IRC and it therefore asked the synod of 1981 to "encourage" the IRC to make the study of WARC which IRC wanted to make anyway. So much for the two "mandates" for the synods of 1972 and 1981. The matter of WARC does not live in the churches. It should never have been raised in the way it was. Yet, affiliating with WARC will affect our church life on all levels. It will do so for ill and not for good.

Ecumenism The Right Way

If there was ever a parting of the ways for the CRC it is now. Already we have gone the wrong way some distance. We are now in ecclesiastical fellowship with RCA, a church which presently goes through an identity crisis of major proportions, prompting the church to have an Identity Task Force. This church, according to editorials in the church's paper *The Church Herald*, now says of itself that "there is no commonly

held belief that characterizes members of this denomination. In other words, no reference any more within the RCA to confessionally held truths. Simply a fog of incoherent beliefs. Yet we are in full fellowship with this church and are going to have a big joint event next year that will serve to make the fog even greater.

Let us return from ill chosen paths. It is never too late to do so. The cause of ecumenism is too noble to be served by WARC's fateful compromises. While saying "no" to WARC, let us reaffirm our commitment to the principles set forth in 1944. And let us then get up and practice these principles. This has never been done before. So it is high time we get busy. One of the things we can do at this synod, beside voting the WARC proposal down, is to demand of IRC that it includes among its nomination for new members, people of all opinions in the church. It is gratifying to see at least one minority position coming from IRC at this time. If more of that went on, the church could then make up its mind in light of all the facts and the cause of the Reformed faith would be immeasurably strengthened, not just internally but everywhere. We all have "promises to keep." Let us keep them with renewed vigor and with commitment to the faith of the fathers.

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CHRISTIAN REFORMED SYNOD AGENDA

People who have to study the materials for our denomination's June synod may welcome a slimmer volume than most of those of recent

years—384 pages instead of some that have been twice that size. It includes few study committee reports, which have, according to a recent

decision, been previously sent to consistories for earlier study. Cutting down needlessly wordy materials is highly desirable, but this drastic ab-

breviation has disadvantages. The World Missions report suggests one must now look for information about our mission elsewhere (p. 72). Many matters that used to be presented to the synod for decision are now decided by boards. This harmonizes with the general process of restructuring our denomination (particularly in the continuing work of the "Vision-21" committee which does not report this year) into a hierarchy which gives ever less account to the churches it is supposed to represent.

World Wide Communication

The Back to God Hour notes our freedom to promote the gospel in comparison with the restrictions in Soviet Russia. It lists our English language outreach, Arabic program into the Muslim world, Spanish language broadcasts over more than 200 stations and broadcasts in Portuguese. Chinese presentations are aimed at evangelism and helping "house-churches." French broadcasts into Europe, North Africa and Quebec have resulted, among other things, in a church in Zaire. Japan, Indonesia and Russia are also objects of our extending outreach.

Educational Confusion

In the Calvin College and Seminary Report one notes especially the Board's investigation, exoneration and defense of Professors Mennin-ga, Van Till and Young against whom there were objections because of their teaching of evolution. Our April and May issues have covered this matter in greater detail, highlighting the fact that we may not compromise the Biblical revelation of God's creation with the arrogant theories of the leaders of our country who, as Herman Bavinck said, have agreed to totally and finally clear "out... whatever of the old Christian world-view consciously or unconsciously still remains in our laws and morals, in our education and civilization." When our churches and schools compromise with that, they are, like many others before them, surrendering to the enemies of Christ and His Gospel. How can we continue to confess that we "believe in God the Father, Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth," and at the same time believe and teach that the latest guesses of unbelieving "scientists" rightly explain away everything

that God's Word says about how it happened? Classis Alberta South in Overture 29 (pp. 376, 377) strenuously objects to this committee and board action. It asks the synod to study and evaluate it because "the contention that these chapters (Gen. 1-11) do not present events that really happened is certainly in conflict with our Reformed confessions and in conflict with Scripture itself." This should be a major issue before the synod.

Among the appointments which the board has made to the seminary faculty, that of Dr. Henry De Moor in the area of church policy, is opposed by overtures from two classes, Alberta South and Hamilton. Their reason is that he "holds and defends" women serving in all church offices, contradicting "the official position of the CRC" (p. 367). This is a valid objection. The trouble is that what he holds is already being promoted by a large part of the seminary faculty.¹

Beside the problem of his views on women in office, we ought to take note of his views of the structure and authority of the church and their bearing on our present problems. Dr. Louis Praamsma's excellent little biography of Abraham Kuyper, *Let Christ Be King*, (Paideia Press, 1985, p. 86) highlighted his struggle to reform a corrupt and hierarchical church. Kuyper "in his penetrating study of the essentials of the church... stressed the primacy of the local congregation with its office-bearers, and the office of all believers as the source of all the special offices in the church." Dr. De Moor in Chapter 10 of his thesis, *Equipping the Saints* (pp. 225-247), despite his superb research, is intensely critical of both of these Biblical principles, tending to dismiss them as mere concessions to secular democracy. For him, the church exercises Christ's authority, but must not encourage "democratic" notions about the office and authority of local churches and the "office" of members. (1) The calling and office of the believer, far from being a mere product of modern democratic political notions, is one of the most pervasive and, through the centuries, one of the most neglected doctrines in the Bible (cf. my articles in Dec. '85 and Jan., Feb., March and April,

'86 *Outlooks*). (2) And the "original" authority of the local consistory and elders is the only part of our denominational structure that is explicitly grounded in the Bible's teaching. The whole elaborate bureaucratic system of authoritative boards, committees and directors, which our denomination is still industriously developing, is a Roman-style perversion of everything the Bible teaches about Christ's church (as the 16th century Reformers stated and Thornwell showed the Presbyterians a hundred years ago). Obviously this hierarchical view of church polity, taught to prospective ministers, can only encourage the Liberal bureaucracy that increasingly seizes power over our churches, and discourage any Kuyper-style efforts to correct it.

In order to understand our growing problems with church order (or really, *DISORDER*) we must recall that in 1973 the synod decided that the Bible permitted the church to adapt or modify the number and function of its offices as it saw fit (*Acts* pp. 64, 673). Four years ago Rev. Henry Vander Kam informed us that in our seminary, of whose Board he used to be president, the Biblical doctrine of the church had not been taught in the Dogmatics department in fifteen years. When our churches dismiss God's Word as our guide to church behavior we really turn our backs on the Reformation and invite the return of hierarchy and every other abuse that called for it. After 20 years of this rejecting the Bible's guidance we should not be surprised at the problems or confusion that trouble our churches. These must multiply when we disregard the Lord's warning: "Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do the things which I say? (Luke 6:46).

Publications

The Publications Committee reports that the long delayed hymnal is still not published and that a World Literature Committee is being developed seeking to coordinate what has been done through non-church organizations. The Liturgical Committee is now called CRC Worship Committee and one of its objectives is "to advise synod" on "the guidance and supervision it

ought to provide local congregations in all liturgical matters" (p. 40). Notice the implied bureaucratic assumption—Who ever gave the synod or its committee a duty to "super-vise" the worship of local churches?

Mission Obscured

The Home Missions report highlights its grandiose plan to increase the denominational membership from just over 300,000 to 400,000 in twelve years, breaking this down into a variety of target figures. While every Christian and church must try to bring a gospel testimony to unreached neighbors, and the report outlines efforts to encourage this, the attempt to organize this from the top down as though it were a sales campaign for a commercial business seems remote from the way the Lord said He would build His church. When we presume to tell Him how many members we want (and then even suggest of what color they must be) we are asking for a fiasco.

When in our outreach to other countries problems multiplied because our World Missions and World Relief were operating separately often in the same areas, our synod determined to combine these two organizations under yet another board, that of "World Ministries." Reportedly "problems are being resolved and increasingly ministries are being coordinated." It is significant that some mission staff "resist the reorganization because they think it is modeled too much after secular Western corporate structures" (p. 73). The competition between two foreign agencies of the same churches had to be corrected, but this combination of missions and material relief increases the threat, observed in past years by the mission organization, that our bringing of the gospel be displaced by all kinds of material and social (or even political) programs. Spotting exactly such a perversion of the gospel, is a recommendation of the "super-board" "that synod petition the government of the United States to terminate its participation in the Nicaraguan war, and petition the governments of Canada and the United States to seek peace, justice, and stability in Central America by every other possible means" (p. 69). This needs to be seen in the light of

other indications that our agencies and at least some of our relief missions people, like the Liberal church organizations with which they like to cooperate, have been supporting the Communist movement in Latin America (see the September 1987 *Outlook*). Last year Classis B.C. Northwest overtured the synod to instruct its World Ministries—CRWRC to discontinue giving aid to CEPAD in Nicaragua, because this "appears to be a tool of the communist Sandinista government," supported by the World Council and similar agencies. The very substantial documentation with which it accompanied that overture, was never even given to the synod advisory committee which had to deal with it (through an oversight, the stated clerk said). Therefore all that the committee and synod received was propaganda from the relief administration which supported CEPAD, with the result that it continued to have our support! How can any Bible-believing Christians have confidence in or support "missions" or "relief" that pervert the gospel by joining Liberal churches in promoting the anti-Christian Communist revolution? We saw Liberal churches pursuing such a policy 40 years ago in China; now we see our own doing the same thing.

Pursuing its broadening and increasingly confused vision, the world relief report states at the outset that it aims to be "true to the Lord's command to help the 'least' of this world," overlooking the fact that the Lord never said that, but said "the least of *these my brethren*." Although we have to be concerned about all men, "Christian relief" is not the same as "world relief." Developing its sociological vision, the report proceeds. "Expatriate staff multiply their impact by concentrating on institution building. High quality and independent institutions and groups need competence in the areas of management, financial control, community control, technical mastery, and skills in evangelism linkage and wholistic ministry." It proposes to expand its work in East Africa by linking up with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tanzania, to help it train "diocesan development officers and local church development committee members in areas of manage-

ment and leadership" thus "synergistically empowering poor communities in Tanzania to develop themselves...." What does all of this jargon mean? Apparently our expert sociologists and bureaucrats try to train other sociologists and bureaucrats for overseas churches, but what, if anything, has this "concentrating on institution building" to do with the mission of Christ's church to bring the gospel? The organization is seeking also to expand its activity in our home churches, complaining that, "Putting in place measurable results-focussed evaluation systems meets with initial skepticism and concern" (p. 82)!

The Committee for Educational assistance to Churches Abroad has been modestly trying to help those churches to train leaders and helping their schools to obtain books. It complains that the "Vision-21" proposal to assign them a slot under the tighter authoritarian bureaucracy was made without consultation or consideration of their largely volunteer work.

Unholy Alliance

Last year our Interchurch Relations Committee sought approval of its "Ecumenical Charter," which after some minor changes, it was given. The gist of that document was that we are in principle one with every church and should try to realize that unity through ecumenical dialog. Although the changes emphasized somewhat our continued adherence to creeds, the charter was loose enough to free the committee for whatever ecumenical adventures it might wish to pursue. Now, as was predicted, appealing to that Charter, it recommends that our synod join the "World alliance of Reformed Churches." One member of the committee, Rev. Gerard Bouma, emphatically disagrees with this recommendation and explains:

My motivation is not that I refuse true ecumenical contacts with other churches, also with churches in Circle 2 (less Reformed). But an ecumenical relationship should not be of such a nature that it will compromise the CRC. WARC in its Act of Union states that the member churches "together affirm their faith in Jesus Christ." Article III of the constitution states that,

amongst others, one of the purposes of the alliance shall be: "to further all endeavours to proclaim the Word of God faithfully." The CRC ought to abstain from membership as long as WARC admits on an equal basis into its membership churches where denial of the faithful proclamation of the Word of God is not militated against, and where denial of some of the most basic and crucial doctrines of Christianity are tolerated.

Rev. G. Bouma is right — as is Dr. M. Woudstra who writes in this *Outlook*. Overtures 20, 21 and 22 voice the same strong objections (p. 372). Joining the organization ALLIES us with some of the most apostate churches we can find, including the United Presbyterians (whose toleration of denial of Christ's deity recently drove out the Evangelical Presbyterians), the even more Liberal United Church of Christ and the United Church of Canada. Although the Alliance constitution makes a qualification for membership, "recognizing that the Reformed tradition is a biblical, evangelical and doctrinal ethos, rather than any narrow and exclusive definition of faith and order" (p. 138), the committee states as ground for joining, that we meet those requirements and can join without compromise (p. 120). The committee is thereby, in fact, denying our creeds which are nothing but "EXCLUSIVE DEFINITIONS OF FAITH AND ORDER." If they do not exclude deniers of what they say, they are not creeds at all! Our joining is supposed to "support and strengthen the Reformed witness" of other churches in the alliance, but how can we strengthen what we have denied by joining the organization? The warm welcome that we are assured is hardly adequate reason to disobey the stern injunction of God's Word, "Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers." (2 Cor. 6:14).

The Committee in an appendix (p. 156) attempts to meet objections and justify its recommendation. Its argument totally relativizes every doctrine, stating that we must "recognize that every church of Christ, as part of His Body, manifests evidence of the work of the Spirit of Christ within it, by which the CRC may be

enriched through contact and dialogue." Notice how explicitly this contradicts every warning that Christ and His apostles issued against "false Christs and false prophets" who "will deceive many" (Matt. 24:11), attacking the church from outside like "savage wolves" and misleading its members from within (Acts 20:29 ff.). Of such warnings the committee wants to hear nothing, as it determinedly takes us into the fellowship with the betrayers of the gospel that it has long sought. It tries to justify our alliance with what it admits are Liberals "which are very tolerant of heresy" with the excuse that these are only "a very small minority" (p. 159) — as though that justified joining them! The Lord did not say "Do not be yoked together with *too many* unbelievers." In false teaching we face a deadly threat, not of numbers but of character — like *CANCER*, the Bible says (2 Tim. 2:17). The committee tries to minimize the seriousness of this ALLIANCE with the excuse that we can witness to the unbelievers after we join them.

The committee also reviews the history of our joining the National Association of Evangelicals in 1943 and leaving it 8 years later, recommending that we rejoin. Some of us appreciated the NAE while we were members and regretted the decision to leave it. Although there are problems in such affiliations, the objections to affiliation with unbelievers such as those in the Alliance does not apply to it.²

The Reformed Ecumenical Synod, of which we are a part, is facing a crisis especially as it meets this year. Its more orthodox Reformed member denominations have been leaving it, disgusted especially with the faithlessness and immorality of the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands (GKN). Those churches, irritated by continuing criticism of their misbehavior, have been demanding a radical constitutional change in the organization to make it less a "synod" and more a mere conference. In the discussions the Orthodox Presbyterians have taken a lead in trying to correct the Dutch Churches, while our delegates have tended to defend those churches. (A recent news report indicated the Orthodox Presbyterians may leave the

RES this year.) This spring a basic constitutional change is to be decided, but we are given no information in this agenda (or other recent *Acts* or *Agendas* of what the constitutional change is. Why the committee secrecy? What is being slipped past us?

Racism Institutionalized

A number of years ago when an anti-racism movement was in the public eye our churches got into the act by appointing a special "race committee" to remove racism. Its activities have over the years especially taken the form of offering special incentives, scholarships and other enticements for non-whites only. To help needy people and deserving students may be a good thing, but to give or withhold such help only on the basis of the color of one's skin is nothing but hypocrisy — doing exactly what one claims to be opposing — and an obviously stupid and very wasteful procedure. Despite objections, one synod after another has continued to increase the quota appropriations for this privileged committee, leaving it free to spend its money for whatever may advance non-white races, and to give special incentives and encouragement to developing "minority leadership." Non-whites can be ordained with half the seminary education of whites and special efforts are being made to persuade minority churches to join the denomination. Traces of this "reverse racism" turn up throughout the agenda, as agencies report on what they are doing to *increase minority leadership*. This hypocrisy has become immutable policy as the church prides itself on its unique multiracial programs. It seems futile to point out that God is no respecter of persons and hates partiality, as the denominational establishment persists in advancing the Liberal slogans of "affirmative action." The report of the race committee (SCORR — pp. 213-220) would have us be grateful that an increasing number of students are accepting our racially discriminatory scholarships and it asks for a \$6.20 per family quota (a budget of about a half million dollars).

Consequences of this our peculiar racist policy become almost hilarious as one reads the agenda account of

our dealings with South Africa (pp. 179-184). In our eagerness to join the popular Liberal chorus of denunciation of that country and show that we are not the same "Dutch Reformed" people as they, our synod a few years ago denounced their ("apartheid") race discrimination as a "heresy" (while our persistent and blatant discrimination in favor of non-whites is presumably a mark of our superior enlightenment, or perhaps "sanctification"). To deal with and admonish those South African Churches for their racist behavior, the synod in 1985 instructed the Interchurch Relations Committee "to establish a joint committee of four which shall include at least two multi-racial members of SCORR — Imagine members of our *racially discriminating committee being sent to South Africa to admonish their churches for their racial discrimination!* Not surprisingly, their benevolent ministrations were received by the South Africans with something less than overwhelming enthusiasm. A professor argued that their committee "had no authorization to drop statements approved by previous synods" — which to our reporter seemed letting "a technicality get in the way of what we...saw to be the will of God." Further discussions elicited the reactions that "the synod had no right to set aside earlier statements as long as these had not been...proven wrong from Scripture," and "we don't have to listen only to foreign churches...." Some remarks were "almost hostile." "The United States is free to make its one nation if it wishes, but South Africa must be free to maintain its many nations." The CRC is meddling in matters which it does not fully understand." "What is the CRC doing about problems in its own country...about secularization?" The South Africans seem to have been remarkably patient with our arrogant hypocrisy, for even the committee was ready to recommend that we not break fellowship with them before the 1989 deadline which we set before further "punishing" them. Our racist committee further recommended that if possible we have NONWHITE representatives of the South African Churches sent to our synod in 1989. Our committee had also been man-

dated to find "victims of hardship at the hands of the (South African) government" to receive our material aid. To its chagrin, neither the white nor the black churches could offer it such lists. When some asked help to construct buildings or support missionary programs, the committee judged making *such gifts* inappropriate. Its final suggestion was that perhaps SCORR would be in a better position to fill this part of its mandate (of making racially discriminatory gifts)! It has plenty of experience. How our admonitions against racism must have impressed the South Africans!

The Synodical Interim Committee report (on p. 237) gives the executive salary scales which now run from a low of \$21,896 to a high of \$66,725. Of additional allowances, which when still reported some years ago, included other items such as substantial vacation bonuses, our report tells us nothing.

Children at the Lord's Supper

A major item facing the synod will be two reports about children taking part in the Lord's Supper. Since these were previously circulated among the churches and were reviewed in our March *Outlook*, a brief summary can be made here. The Majority Report tries to combine two contradictory views. One is that the Supper should be open to all baptized children of believers just because they are in God's covenant and church. The other is that they should be admitted only when they confess their personal faith, because, as the Bible teaches in 1 Cor. 11, they must do it "in remembrance" of Christ, "discerning His Body," and "proclaiming His death." The Minority Report, instead of trying to find a compromise between those contradictory views, argues more clearly and convincingly that admitting non-confessing children to the Supper has to be rejected, as it was by almost all the Reformed churches and that our practice of admitting to the Supper only after confession of faith should continue. The Minority appeals to the teachings of 1 Cor. 11, which the Majority tries to evade by its arguments about the covenant, connecting the Supper with Baptism and with the Passover and the supposed educational value of having

children "learn by doing." The Minority shows such arguments to be contrary to the plain teachings of the Bible and destructive to the churches' order, discipline and evangelism, as they proved to be in the New England Congregational churches which tried to practice them. How can any Christian church have two standards of membership, one requiring members to believe in Christ and the other, in practice, making it unnecessary? Clearly the Minority view is supported by the Bible, and Reformed church history and practice.

Overture 18 from Classis Hudson asks the synod to delay deciding this matter because the churches have not been given the required six months to study it.

More Revision of Creeds

Although the Heidelberg Catechism had been recently retranslated, a committee was assigned to consider further updating it in line with the new hymnbook and to retranslate the ecumenical creeds. To state the matter more bluntly, pressure had been coming from the "feminist lobby" to replace masculine words as much as possible with "inclusive language," which had been done in other parts of the hymnal. The committee now presents its proposed changes in the creeds (pp. 344-358). Three overtures bear on the matter. One from Lake Erie (19, p. 371) urges adopting the proposed changes so as not to further delay printing the long awaited new hymnal. One from Hudson (No. 16) urges delay so that the churches may have time to study the changes. One from Hamilton (No. 17) asks that the "inclusive language" used not be accepted. The committee making the translation argues that its "inclusive language," substituting "human" for "man" is actually more faithful to the original German of the Catechism. Doesn't that clinch the matter? Not necessarily. Hamilton argues that the earlier committee report considered such changes and rejected them because they are not more accurate and especially because the Scriptures (whose teachings the Catechism should reflect) use "man" in the key passages involved. Their argument is substantial, also as applied to other key Bible passages

and teachings than the example they cite (Gen., 1:26, "Let us make man"). Changing "God created man good...so that he might know," to "God created them good...so that they might know;" "God created man with the ability..." to "God created humans;" "man's guilt," to "what a human is guilty of," besides being extremely clumsy, substantially change our key statements of covenant doctrine to something less Biblical. We cannot escape the individual masculines of "Just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners" (Rom. 5:19) and "since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man" (1 Cor. 15:21) by grasping for clumsy substitutes and plurals. Why should we try to do it just to satisfy a few hypersensitive feminists' prejudices?

Several overtures address problems raised by the many recent hasty changes in the church order (pp. 364 ff.). Overture 5 would make Calvin a private college and Overture 6 would have the seminary stop giving degrees designed for ministers to women.

Frustrated Appeals

Orange City, Iowa's First Church (pp. 378 ff.) in 1986, following Church order Article 13, attempted to call the editor of our denominational *Banner* to give account before his consistory of his doctrinally questionable views about the Bible's authority as we confess it in Articles V and VII of the Confession of Faith, as the Form of Subscription requires. Its requests were twice arbitrarily rejected by the consistory as lacking sufficient grounds. Its appeal in 1987 to Classis Grand Rapids East against this consistory action received the same kind of brushoff (with an irrelevant citation of a decision of the synod a number of years ago in connection with its refusal to act on our appeal in the Verhey case). The Church now calls attention to the irregularities of this procedure in the light of many con-

trary precedents and asks the synod to instruct the classis and consistory to do their duties according to the disciplinary rules of our church order.

Classis Minnesota South asks the synod to advise the consistory of Eastern Ave. CRC of Grand Rapids to cease having women serve as adjunct elders, as it has been doing in defiance of the church order and synod decisions. It also asks the synod to instruct the classis to fulfill its duty to correct the church, which it has refused to do.

The history of these cases again repeatedly shows how the Biblical rules to protect the churches against false doctrine and practice are being regularly perverted to protect any who want to spread such false doctrine and practice. Will this synod's actions be an exception?

Conclusion

We know that there are many faithful Christians in our churches and their agencies. But anyone who follows the decisions of our synods and the development of our bureaucracy had to be often saddened by observing how Bible, creed and church order are regularly being ignored or perverted. When our schools compromise our Christian confession of the Creator, missionary and relief workers turn proclamation of the gospel into serving the Antichristian cause of Communist "liberation," the interchurch committee allies us with the enemies of Christ, and churches and assemblies pervert discipline into promotion of anti-Christian heresy, the results begin to conform ever more closely to the church that "ascribes more power and authority to itself and its ordinances than to the Word of God, and will not submit itself to the yoke of Christ..." — what we in Our *Belgic Confession* (Article XXIX) confess is a "false Church." Observing the way synod after synod pursues this deviant course must drive every Bible-believing Christian to stop supporting and separate from

the intolerable perversions and to seek fellowship with churches and consistories who will faithfully pray, work and fight for the opposite and ultimately triumphant cause of the Lord and His Gospel. PDJ

NOTES

1. On April 18 Dr. M. Hugen at a public meeting in the seminary sponsored by the women's committee spoke on "Why I Believe the Bible Requires the Ordination of women." He argued that the Holy Spirit, who was poured out on all believers on Pentecost to make them the Lord's prophets, was now leading us to understand that the old authoritarian barrier walls between people were broken down so that, despite some incidental "difficult" prohibiting texts, (1 Cor. 14, 1 Tim. 2, 1 Peter), all gifted people might serve in all church offices.

"A project proposal entitled 'Gender Roles: Stability and Change in the Context of a Christian Worldview' was approved for study in the Calvin Center for Christian Scholarship during the 1989-90 academic year" (p. 27).

2. A particularly bad practice that has developed in the appointment of permanent committees is that of having committees nominate their own successors, with the result that they tend to perpetuate themselves as a small, similarly thinking clique with little relation to the large body of the church which they are supposed to represent. Note, for example, that Interchurch Relations nominates two members from Eastern Avenue Church which has distinguished itself for its feminist defiance of church order, one of them, a woman who has served as an illegal associate elder, and the other, a professor who recently caricatured Abraham Kuyper and his foolish and destructive Calvinism (p. 127; cf. Feb. '88 *Outlook* and Oct. and Nov. '87 *Reformed Journals*).

BASIC BIBLE TEACHINGS

V. Salvation: "The Unsearchable Riches of Christ"
General References: Eph. 2:1-10; Rom. 8:30-34.

Especially we who have long been exposed to God's gospel need to be repeatedly reminded of the "immensities" of His salvation. Think of Peter's reminder (2 Peter 1:2-4) that "His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness through the knowledge of" Christ with its "exceeding great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." Or think of Paul's breathtaking reminder of those "unsearchable riches" (Eph. 3:8, 14ff.), their "width and length and depth and height... the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God." In such a brief survey as this one can hardly hope to do more than direct attention to a few dimensions of this "so great a salvation," which Heb. 2:3 warns us not to neglect.

1. "Justification by Faith"

When the distraught keeper of the prison in Philippi faced the missionaries with the question, "What must I do to be saved?" he was answered, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household" (Acts 16:30, 31). "The gospel of Christ... is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes..." (Rom. 1:16). Paul had been taught that man must save himself from his troubles by his own efforts. God's word taught and teaches us that our problem as sinners under the judgment of a righteous God are far too serious for such futile remedies. God saves us by putting us right with Him-

self through believing in Jesus Christ and His taking our place (Rom. 3:20-26). "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Cor. 5:21).

2. "You Must Be Born Again"

Salvation means much more than being forgiven our moral and spiritual debts through believing in Christ as our substitute. To really believe in Him is not something that we ourselves can achieve. Even such believing, Paul wrote (Eph. 2:8) is "not of yourselves; it is the gift of God." Our Lord said, "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him" (John 6:44). He shocked Nicodemus by telling that teacher, "You must be born again" (John 3:7). Nothing less than a rebirth to new life is needed to save us and that is exactly what the Lord's salvation includes. "God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2:4-7, cf. Canons of Dordt III and IV, Art. 12).

3. Adopted Children of God

The Bible teaches us that the believer in Christ has become a child of God, both "born again" and "adopted" to be that. It is often assumed that Christianity teaches that all people are children of God. The

Lord teaches us that, although mankind was created so, since man's revolt against Him this is no longer true. To the Jews who claimed they were children of God while rejecting Christ, He said, "You are of your father the devil," the murderer and father of lies, to whom their lives showed they were related (John 8:44). Only to those who believed in Him did He give "the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name" (1:12). "God sent forth His Son... to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, 'Abba, Father!' Therefore you are... a son, and... an heir of God through Christ" (Gal. 4:4-7; the word "abba" was an intimate word for father, like our "Daddy").

4. Conversion

Salvation involves a radical change in our whole way of living, a turning from sin to God (Isaiah 55:7). It is sometimes claimed that to children of Christian families, given the promises of God's covenant to believers and their children (Acts 2:39), such a "turn around" is not necessary. The Bible warns us that this is a serious error. Though all may not experience such a radical conversion as Paul, all must turn from sin to God (John 3:3). Our Lord told His followers, "unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 18:3). Paul was addressing, not pagans, but the Corinthian church when he

wrote, "we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God" (2 Cor. 5:20).

5. Sanctification and Perfection

We must think of "conversion" from sin to God as not just a single "experience," but as a whole different way of life—one called "holy," which means separated from sin and dedicated to God. Christians are ordered to "pursue... holiness, without which no one will see the Lord" (Heb. 12:14). All believers in Christ are "called to be saints" (Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:2). We cannot have Christ as Savior while refusing to obey His orders as Lord (Luke 6:46ff.). Accordingly, we sometimes sing, "How vast the benefits divine which we in Christ possess. We are redeemed from sin and shame, and called to holiness." We are called to "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure... that you may become blameless and harmless,

children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life" (Phil. 2:12-16).

Although the Lord is making every believer perfect, and we must aim at that, the Bible also teaches us that no one reaches that goal in our present life. The believer may not go on sinning (1 John 3:4ff.), but is also warned that "if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves" (1:8). Paul confessed that he had not reached perfection, but he "pressed on" toward it as in a race "toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:12-14).

6. Our Assurance

Our struggle and even battle for Christian living is not to be discouraging, but an eager and persistent effort toward a certain, thrilling hope. We must share the confidence of Paul writing to the Philippians, "that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ" (1:6). We are en-

couraged to "be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Cor. 15:58). "He is able to keep you from stumbling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy," to His own glory (Jude 24). PDJ

Questions:

1. What must I do to be saved? (Acts 16:30, 31; Rom. 1:16, 17; 3:20-24.)
2. How is believing related to being "born again"? (Eph. 2:8; John 6:44, 38-40.)
3. How do we become children of God? (John 1:12; Gal. 4:4, 5; 3:26.)
4. Does one born and baptized in the church need to be converted? (John 3:3; Mt. 18:3; 2 Cor. 5:20.)
5. How is our being born again related to godly living? (Heb. 12:14; Phil. 2:12, 13.)
6. Can a Christian live a holy life? (1 John 1:8; 2:4, 5; 3:6; Phil. 3:12-14.)
7. What is our Christian assurance? (Phil. 1:6; 1 John 2:3-5; Jude 24.)

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A DOSE OF MORAL COURAGE

Scarcely anything in our modern society is so unwelcome as a moral judgment or a spiritual pronouncement. Evils of all sorts must be explained without reference to ethics or to God. This has reached a point close to absurdity whenever AIDS, for example, is referred to in the media. There is a studied attempt to prescribe ways of curtailing the spread of this disease which avoids all open reference to the real moral and evil in man's life. None, it seems, dare to grasp the nettle by saying that there is a Cause behind the curse. To suggest, as Paul does in Romans 1, that God has visited man's irregularity of life with a condign punishment is to commit a social crime and to raise Cain. So a veil of dissimulation has to be thrown over all the scandals of modern life. Anything which might look like a divine judgement is thus processed and conveniently laundered into non-ethical and non-judgmental categories.

One besetting sin of many religious spokesmen is their readiness to play this very same charade which the unbelieving world has invented. The main rule of the game is to avoid upsetting anyone's conscience. To be successful at such modern religious 'communication' (the term so much in vogue) one must become an expert in shadow-boxing and beating of the air with ecclesiastical fists. It reminds one forcibly of men jousting with balsawood lances or combatting with buttoned swords that cannot draw blood.

A perfect specimen of how to fence and always miss your mark is to be found in the two ARCIC statements which have been recently

drawn up as a basis for marriage between the Anglican and Roman Catholic churches. There ought to have been issued with these sophisticated statements a key to tell the reader how to transpose the sweetness and light into theological truth and historical reality.

The tortuous steps backwards, forwards, up and down, in and out, to and fro, now this side and now that, are the only things that betray the unmentionable fact that the two dancing-partners are neither used to one another's embrace nor trustful of one another's movements. The whispered conversation between the two lovers would amuse us if there were not stupendous issues at stake: 'Here we both are at long last—you and I. In the past we had great disagreements, of course. But that was all because we did not truly understand one another. Now we know that we both really meant the same things all the time. Let us both talk in carefully-coded speech and our people will never know what we are doing till the deed is done. You will not really mind the Pope being at the head, will you? What, one wonders, would a Robert Browning have made of such a scenario?

There is among all sorts of persons a crying need to take a dose of moral courage. The need is not for more cleverness or more education, not for more analysis or more research into man's problems. It is for more straightforward speaking. It is for more openness. It is for more boldness to call things what they are and to set them in the light of God's Word. The man who will courageously refuse to play the popular game of deception is the man who will win the title of prophet to this generation.

This is what every pulpit should be doing. It is the glory of the pulpit that there a man speaks as the interpreter of heaven's mind, no matter what the world may say. Our people come to God's house weary. Their minds have been numbed by the secular argument which eliminates God and anaesthetises moral judgment. When they come to the congregation, they thirst for renewed ethical and spiritual rearmament. The task of the pulpit is to sharpen blunted convictions in those who hear us and to renew their confidence in the things they have believed out of God's Word.

There are many things which may make a preacher tone down his message. He may be afraid of those denominational leaders who wield the cudgels of power. Or he may have a cowardly fear of disturbing the peace, though he knows perhaps that beneath the surface of the congregation there lies an abundance of rotteness and death. Or he may be a career-man who wants to climb to the top at the price of treasonable silence. Every age spawns such men.

Whatever weakness a minister may have, however, let him not be spineless. A spineless prophet is a contradiction in terms and an unnatural monster. Society and the modern church alike both need to hear the prophetic voice of men who call evil and sin by their proper names. They need men whose sermons will lift their hearers above the hear-and-now to the great transcendental realities of God's ultimate judgement, and will in that way show the conscience what God thinks of His wayward world. The pulpit's task is to declare the sinfulness of sin and

the one divine remedy for its removal.

It may be wondered whether one pulpit in a thousand is doing its God-given work as it should. There is too little thunder. The lion's roar is absent. Too few sermons smite with the fist of biblical certainty or call for a break with conventional religious vices. Most sermons of the day suffer from chronic anaemia and betray too much the taste of this present world.

What is the malady that has left the churches dumb while moral and spiritual wickedness is so rampant? Is it not at two points that this disease must be examined?

Firstly, the Christian needs to be reminded that there is no loss on earth more deadly than the loss of religious conviction. It is not enough that truth be held in the head. It must be held in the heart and in the soul. That is what makes all the dif-

ference. Are we ready to suffer for the truth? Have we *loved* the truth? It is love of the truth which God demands of his people [2 *Thess.* 2:10]. That is what real Calvinism and real Puritanism stands for. Indeed, that is what real Christianity itself is.

Secondly, the Christian needs to be reminded that if ever men forsake the love of the truth, they fall under God's judgment. There is a sore punishment for disliking the truth. God sends upon such people a 'strong delusion, that they should believe a lie' [2 *Thess.* 2:11]. When men are judicially blinded in this manner, they become fit to turn black into white. The Roman mass can now be interpreted as only the Holy Eucharist under an alien name. Mary becomes the Mother of God and Mediatrix of our salvation. The ministry becomes the priesthood. All churches are just one. So truth

stands on its head and theology is made to seem nonsense. Our Protestant Reformers now simply 'misunderstood' the teaching of the Council of Trent concerning Justification! And the Church of Rome anathemised the teaching of the Reformers because they did not quite appreciate their nuances! Similarly, society today fudges the ethical questions relating to AIDS, abortion, marital fidelity, the guilt of criminal behaviour....The list is endless. The plague is already begun.

O! for a dose of moral courage! Let preachers take the lead and let the people follow. And may God arise in His grace to deliver us all.

*Reprinted from the April 1988
BANNER OF TRUTH.*

EVOLUTION AT DORDT COLLEGE (July-Aug. 1987 OUTLOOK)

In a recent meeting, the Presbytery of the Dakotas of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church received and acted on a report concerning the views of one of its ministers, the Rev. Richard G. Hodgson. Mr. Hodgson is also a professor at Dordt College, a Christian liberal arts college in northwest Iowa related to the Christian Reformed Church.

Mr. Hodgson's views and teaching with regard to creation and evolution have been seriously questioned in several Christian publications. On April 10, last year, Mr. Hodgson took part in a debate on that subject at Hillsdale College in Michigan. Following the debate several publications alleged that he had espoused evolutionary views that are contrary to the biblical doctrine of creation.

Last September the Presbytery of the Dakotas, Mr. Hodgson's governing body, directed its Credentials Committee to look into his views and

report back to the Presbytery. The Committee read his class syllabus on geology and several other papers he had written and met with Mr. Hodgson. The Committee reported to the Presbytery at its March 2 & 3 meeting in Cheyenne, Wyoming, presenting a five-page paper of its own, accompanied by several papers written by Mr. Hodgson.

The Committee reported that Mr. Hodgson accepts "the sovereign creative work of God as it is portrayed in Genesis 1." "He explicitly rejects both humanistic and theistic macroevolution, although he is not prepared to identify the 'kinds' of Genesis with some particular level of taxonomic classification. He affirms the special creation of the first man out of the dust of the ground and the first woman from the rib of the man; he rejects the idea that mankind evolved in any way from prehuman species." The Report goes on to say

NEWS RELEASE

that, "Mr. Hodgson holds, on exegetical grounds that are satisfactory to himself and to others within the church, to the 'age-day' interpretation of Genesis 1 and accepts an ancient-earth rather than a young-earth view of creationism. He refers to himself as a progressive creationist; that is, God created by a series of creative acts occurring over long ages all the creatures we now know." "Mr. Hodgson generally accepts many prevailing views of geologic history which young-earth creationists reject. He also accepts limited evolutionary development within the 'kinds' of Genesis 1...." The Committee Report concludes, "These views may be cause for disagreement..., but they do not put him outside the boundaries set by our standards as we have hitherto understood and applied them."

The Committee indicated that Mr. Hodgson's problem following the

Hillsdale debate may have been due to a failure on the part of the reporters to understand that he had been invited explicitly to defend contemporary evolutionary views, including non-Christian humanistic evolution, in opposition to the young-earth creationist view presented by Dr. Duane Gish. Mr. Hodgson himself has stated that he should never have accepted the invitation and that he did not adequately express his own convictions.

The Committee also examined the way in which Mr. Hodgson integrates his scientific work with biblical doctrine. The Committee reported some problems in this area but felt that these problems had more to do with how Mr. Hodgson sometimes expresses himself than with his actual underlying convictions. Mr. Hodgson readily expressed willingness to work these problems out so as to give clearer expression to the foundational primacy of Scripture for all scientific work.

Mr. Hodgson was present at the meeting of Presbytery and answered many questions from various persons.

The Presbytery readily adopted, with no audible dissent, the recommendation of the Committee that its Report be accepted and the investigation end. The Presbytery further directed its Credentials Committee to prepare a news release to be sent to various Christian periodicals and to urge that they be sure to get the facts straight whenever reporting on a matter that might effect the reputation of any individual, institution or church.

David W. King, Chairman
P.O. Box 385
Hamill, SD 57534

Dear Rev. De Jong:

In the July/August 1987 issue of your publication an article appeared under the title "Evolution at Dordt College."

In that article questions were raised concerning Professor Richard Hodgson's position regarding creation and evolution. By implication questions were also raised as to the position of Dordt College regarding this very important and sensitive issue.

Subsequently it was indicated to you that the Dordt College Board of Trustees had appointed a committee "to study and evaluate...Professor

Hodgson's position regarding creation and evolution."

On March 10, 1988, the study committee presented its report to a full meeting of the Board of Trustees. The recommendations of the committee were adopted, along with the following statement, which was formulated for the purpose of making the Board's position known to the public:

The Board of Trustees of Dordt College, in its meeting on March 10, 1988, received a report from a committee appointed to study and evaluate Professor Richard Hodgson's position regarding creation and evolution. The committee reported that Professor Hodgson's personal position fully embraced the biblical doctrine of creation. At the same time the committee identified certain weaknesses in his scientific methodology and manner of expression which caused confusion regarding his position.

The Board approved the recommendation of the committee that the Board of Dordt College concur with the administration's actions in which Professor Hodgson will withdraw the syllabus which has caused confusion and, for the present, discontinue his teaching of an introductory geology course. Professor Hodgson was

encouraged to deal sensitively and carefully with the issue of creation and evolution and to work closely with the academic community in clarifying his position in this area.

The Board of Trustees declared that it is satisfied that appropriate and sufficient measures are being taken to ensure that the teaching of Professor Hodgson is fully in harmony with the Word of God as interpreted in the Reformed confessions.

The Academic Council of the College is now instructed "to pursue an institutional study of the issue of creation and evolution." It is also understood that the Board of Trustees will receive periodic reports concerning the progress and the findings of this communal study.

It is our hope that this statement of the Board of Trustees will answer the questions which have been raised and also make clear the commitment of Dordt College to approach the matter of creation and evolution from an integrated biblical perspective.

Sincerely,
J.B. Hulst
President, Dordt College
Sioux Center, Iowa

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

MID-AMERICA REFORMED SEMINARY

With much interest and respect I reflect on the thoughts of Dr. James A. De Jong, President of Calvin Theological Seminary, when in the Banner of January 25, 1988, he speaks out his convictions pertaining to the thoroughness, firmness and soundness of Calvin Theological Seminary.

But when called upon to give his estimate of Mid-America Reformed Seminary, Dr. De Jong, I believe, could have been a bit more sympathetic. His views are, as I understand them, that (1) MARS was organized purposefully to be an "alternative" to Calvin. And (2) that the new seminary would have been more respectful had the organizers consulted denominational cooperation. In both of these instances, I believe, there is mistaken thought.

Take the second of the two. It is hardly conceivable that the Christian Reformed Denomination, already having a seminary,

would cooperate in organizing an "alternate" seminary.

Secondly, take a good look at the first instance. Did the proponents of MARS really intend that its organization be an "alternate" of Calvin? Let's see.

For example, one might conceive of a few ministers, getting together over a cup of coffee. Soon drifting into interesting conversation, one suggests, "Wouldn't it be good to have a seminary of our own?"

I am not saying this because I believe this kind of thinking is held over the heads of those responsible for MARS. However, should anyone conceive of Mid-America Seminary as having its beginnings in something similar to this, let he or she take careful notes of the following.

As far as my memory of the history of the Christian Reformed church goes back I recall a tendency with some of its membership to be concerned about what they believed were signs of infiltration of liberalism. As time went on it became evident that there were good reasons for this concern.

Not too many years ago Synod was confronted, among other things, with three important issues: (1) how to understand the first chapters of Genesis through the flood; (2) women in church offices; (3) the reality of some Biblical miracles. These issues did not just spring up overnight, but had been brewing in the consciousness of the church many years before they came to a head.

The concerned undoubtedly did their part at Synod. But trying to exert more influence, they also acted in another way. They had grown significantly, and held meetings in the United States and Canada, discussing what should be done to offset the dangers of liberalism that threatened the spiritual health of the Church.

Through all this activity two options presented themselves: separation, or fighting error from within. Under the circumstances, separation could be construed as a heresy. So moving into the second option the Mid-America Reformed Seminary was born. A commendable beginning indeed! Whenever errors had to be dealt with, it has always been a practice in Christian circles not to separate (unless separation was the only course open), but to fight these errors from within. This became and continues to be the main objective for the institution of MARS.

And I do not believe that Dr. De Jong feels that MARS in any way, be it ever so small, is what he would consider a hindrance to the successful operation of Calvin Theological Seminary.

Ring Star
Retired Minister of the
Christian Reformed Church
Sunset Manor
725 Baldwin St.
Jenison, MI 49428

STEWARDSHIP RIGHTS

Dear Editor,

There has been some writing done in criticism of the quota system (eg. "Stewardship Rights," Arrick, 3-88). I wish to write something in favor of the quota system, not because it is in every way the ideal, but because it has much to recommend it that I do not wish to abandon.

I realize that there is error in the way the quota method is commonly understood and employed, but properly understood it can be a useful way to join together as a church to commit ourselves to support of the church's mission. Synod has made some progress in clarifying the fact that quotas are not bills which must be paid. Churches are free to contribute less than the full quota without fear of

piling up back payments. However, we also encourage generosity by agreeing on some goals together, realizing that the goal cannot be applied equally to all. The quota commitment (or encouragement) can be a healthy way to remind churches that there is important ministry going on beyond the local congregation, within our own denomination.

I find it encouraging that many churches which are contributing the full quota commitment are not considering that to mean their bill is paid, but are taking frequent offerings for above quota giving and other worthy causes.

Perhaps with careful teaching we might learn to see quotas as promises to prayerfully and financially support particular forms of ministry within the church.

Blessings,
Thomas J. Vos, Pastor
First Christian Reformed Church,
Wellsburg, Iowa

REPLY

Dear Peter:

Is it ideal? In all honesty, I believe the Quota System is ideal. It is predicated upon the perpetual existence of an ideal situation among the Churches and Institutions of The Christian Reformed Denomination. Namely, that they remain unified in doctrine and practice.

The problem, to me, is that the ideal system no longer matches the real situation.

The answer: we need a realistic system of giving that encompasses the doctrinal and practical pluriformity within the Christian Reformed Denomination.

Exactly what that realistic system might be, I don't know. But whatever system we arrive at, it will have to be a system that preserves the stewardship rights of believers, as found in such passages as II Cor. 8 and 9—The wisdom and giving policy which God outlines for us and which takes account of the real situation of the Church.

The quota system is ideal. It erred when confronted with reality.

Sincerely,
Rev. Steve Arrick

REDEEMER COLLEGE ON EVOLUTION

(Redeemer College, located near Hamilton, Ontario, in response to an inquiry about its stance on evolution, has given us this statement.)

Redeemer College has a very strenuous interview procedure for every faculty member to be appointed. Included in the interviewing procedure is an interview with the President. The President's interview deals primarily with the applicant's personal relationship with the Lord and how the applicant seeks to strengthen that relationship. Included in this interview is an inquiry into the applicant's view of Biblical authority and themes of creation, fall and redemption. We are pleased to be able to state that every faculty member at Redeemer College has a commitment to Biblical authority and is involved in the advancement of learning and dissemination of knowledge on the basis of the Reformed confessions, traditions and perspectives. For this reason, the question of evolution has not become an issue at Redeemer College. Redeemer College does wish to give leadership regarding the question of evolutionism and creationism. For that reason, various members of the Foundations and Natural Sciences Divisions are engaged in dialog with professors at Calvin College. Also these professors give public lectures regarding these questions.

EDITORIAL & CIRCULATION OFFICES

I would like to have published in the next issue of THE OUTLOOK the following:

Thanks be to God and praise for giving the Rev. Peter De Jong, Managing Editor of THE OUTLOOK the faith, ability, and courage to write the article "Calvin Surrenders to Evolution, April '88." It seems to me that nobody could have made a better critique of the report of Calvin's Board of Trustees regarding the study of the teachings of three of Calvin's professors.

Rev. De Jong is one of God's faithful, caring Watchmen warning us against the lies of Satan. I am afraid that God is going to hold some preachers guilty for keeping silent instead of preaching the great need to have faith in God's Word.

Alice Oosterhouse
Grand Rapids, Michigan.