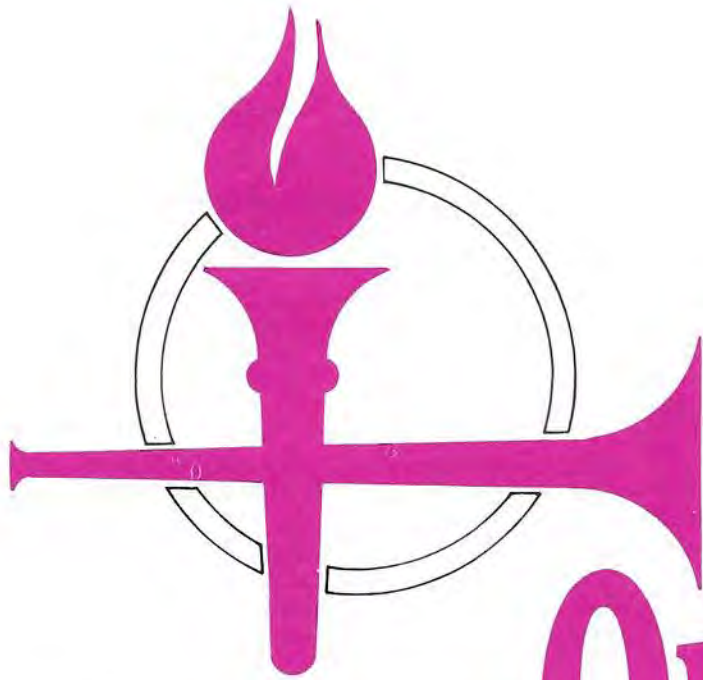




Outlook

*devoted to the exposition
and defense of the
reformed faith*

Evolution in Christian Schools

Science Held Hostage

New Hymnbook

JANUARY ~~1988~~

1989

CHRIST WILL BUILD HIS CHURCH

John Blankespoor

"I will build my church and the gates of Hades will not overcome it" (Matt. 16:18b).

• • • • •

Another year lies ahead.

What will it bring? What will we experience if we may live another year? Such questions may arise in our minds, perhaps accompanied with feelings of insecurity and fear. What will happen to the world, to the church, to our families, to our children, and to ourselves? To such questions, we have no answers. We do know that in 1989 Christ will "build His church."

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The setting of these words of Christ is near Caesarea Philippi in a conversation between Jesus and His disciples. Jesus' earthly ministry was nearing its climactic end. He asked them a basic question to which He wanted them to have the right answer. He asked them who people thought that He really was. After the disciples gave some answers, He asked the same question of them: "Who do you think I am?" This was the important question. We know Peter's answer, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." The disciples must know that this answer was given them by the Father in heaven. Then Jesus added that on this Peter ("petra" meaning "rock") He would build His church, and the gates of Hades would not overcome it. The last part of this answer is the subject of this meditation.

The Lord speaks about the *church*. The church is the body of saved sinners called out of this world into fellowship with Christ and with one another. These people God chose from before the foundation of the world. While many members of that

church already enjoy the blessings of the church, triumphant in heaven, some are living on the earth today, and others still have to be born.

The gathering of these children of God will cross boundaries of all denominations that are true to God's Word and confess its cardinal truths. By the grace of God in Christ, they will be gathered from the "four corners" of the earth, from various times of history, from all races, countries, nations and languages. What a gathering that heavenly multitude will be.

Christ says that this is *His* church: "I will build my church." It's not our church, not the church of pastors or elders and deacons. It is His alone. He is its Owner and Builder. He calls the church a "building." of this "building," Peter calls the members "living stones" (1 Pet. 2:5). Jesus will build this, His church. The Heidelberg Catechism nicely summarizes the Bible teachings that the Son of God through His Spirit and Word, out of the entire human race, from the beginning of the world to the end, gathers, protects, and preserves for Himself a community chosen for eternal life, and united in true faith.

This text says that "the foundation" of His church will be the confession of Peter as "the rock." That Christ will build this church means that He will gather His people, strengthen them and preserve them. Christ will do this in 1989. Of this one thing, we are sure.

• • • • •

We read, also that "the gates of Hades will not overpower it." Other older versions read, "the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it." Hades (hell) is here spoken of as the abode or dwelling place of the devil with all his cohorts. It is the stronghold of the

devil from which warriors stream forth to attack the church. This army of enemies of the church is in the world today. It was present throughout the history of the Old Testament and when Jesus was on earth and will be in this world until the end of time. In Revelation 12 we read that the dragon (the devil) was enraged against the woman (the church) and went off to make war against the rest of her offspring, those who obey God's commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus. This war will continue in 1989. The thought, of this continuing war may not be popular or attractive to people or even to the church of our time *but, it is the truth, the Word of God*. Our Lord assures us that *He will build His church and the gates of Hades will never overpower her*. Whatever the devil may do or try to do against Christ's church, He will build it. That assurance is our comfort and hope.

• • • • •

It is important for us to know how Satan attacks the church. In history he has mainly used two methods, attacking the church from without and from within. From without, he has again and again brought persecution upon people of God. He is doing this today. Although we in the United States or Canada may be unaware of it, reliable reports tell us that more people are being persecuted today than ever before in the history of the world. Satan also tries to destroy the church from within, in a more subtle and dangerous attack on the Word of God. He tried this already in Paradise, really calling God's word a lie. He told Adam and Eve that they would not die if they ate of the forbidden fruit. Today in the same attack he asks, "Is the Bible the infallible and inerrant Word of God or not?" The

devil's attacks on the church in various ways deny God's Word. He denies that there is any antithesis or difference between that Word and men's contrary teachings. He ridicules that Word and encourages it's neglect. Think also of the humanism, secularism and materialism that have crept into the church. Perhaps the greatest threat to the church today, is it's own apathy, lethargy and indifference. The prophet Amos warned, "Woe to those who are at ease in Zion." Today many members of the church, who are all called upon to be warriors in this great battle, don't even realize that there is a battle going on. Although we may still sing, "Onward Christian Soldiers, Marching as to War," or "Stand up, Stand up for Jesus, ye Soldiers of the Cross," we must remember that sleeping soldiers will win no wars.

We must not lose courage. The last word of Scripture is not a negative one. We must come back to those words of Jesus, "I will build my church." Christ is Lord of His church in 1989. While the devil tries to destroy the church by denying the Word, the one sure defense for the church and it's weapon in fighting this important battle is the confession and use of this Word. The Word is "the sword of the Spirit." We must confess the infallibility and inerrancy of the Word. We must keep that Word. Our pastors must preach the Word and nothing else. Let the elders and deacons be faithful to the Word in their work in the church. May there be many Bible classes in our churches, studying the Word. May our Christian school teachers use this Word as their guide. May parents use this Word faithfully in training their children. And last, but not least, may we all, old and young, be faithful in personal devotions, studying this Word with prayer. May we daily live by it and, if need be, die for it.

That Word above all earthly powers -
No thanks to them - abideth;
The Spirit and the gifts are ours
Through Him who with us sideth.
Let goods and kindred go,
This mortal life also;
The body they may kill,
God's truth abideth still,
His kingdom is forever.
Martin Luther



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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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SCIENCE + BIBLE = TRUTH!

Stephen M. Arrick

SCIENCE + BIBLE = TRUTH. This is the methodology of the current scientific community at Calvin College. We have already seen a lengthy presentation of the results of this methodology upon our doctrine of Scripture, God, Creation, and Man in Howard Van Till's book, *The Fourth Day*.

Scripture is no longer truth in and of itself. Scripture's truth claims must be tested by the scientific community, and if it passes the test, we will let it stand. But, if it does not pass the test, we will redefine Scripture by some "higher critical" slight of hand. Let's call the particular passage in question "word portraits," "religious myth couched in poetic form," or something of the sort. Let's not try to find a reasonable explanation for Scripture's historic and factual claims. It's Science *plus* the Bible all the way. And if the consensus of the scientific community says one thing, and the Bible another, then we must redefine the Bible and our doctrine at every point of discrepancy between the two.

The evangelical Christian community has always been on the front line in the scientific pursuit. Christian scientists see no incompatibility between good theology and good scientific methodology. They respect both the truth of Scripture and the discoveries of the scientific community. But for the Christian scientist, there is always a single standard by which scientific truth claims are judged: the Scripture. Christian scientists are called to use this methodology, and by it to expose false evidences and theories which are incompatible with the truth claims of Scripture. Christian scientists study science with the knowledge and conviction that what they do discover will be in harmony with the truth of Scripture. If something must be redefined, then it

should not be the Bible and its clear teachings: we should reinterpret our evidence and redefine our scientific theories. A responsible and biblical scientific methodology would be:

All Truth is God's Truth

The Bible is True

Therefore, All Scientific Truth

Claims Must Agree With the Bible

Although this is the route Howard Van Till claims to pursue, he fails to apply it when he faces his first test. Instead of reinterpreting his evidence and redefining his theory, he insists that we redefine the Scripture by using a higher critical method.

Instead of saying that all scientific truth claims must agree with the Bible, he attempts to adjust the Bible so as to make it agree with all scientific truth claims.

He does this when he talks about a universal flood. Since geologists say that there is no evidence for such a flood, it cannot have occurred.

Therefore, we are implored not to teach this story to our children, students, and congregations. Instead, we should interpret the Bible in a different way and stop saying what we have always said about the flood.

Does Howard Van Till not know that there is a "higher critical" explanation for everything in the Bible? For the origin of Israel's religion, the Tower of Babel, the lives of the Patriarchs, fire and brimstone at Sodom and Gomorrah, the plagues upon Egypt, the Exodus through the Red Sea, Moses' visits face to face with God, Joshua and the walls of Jericho, Samson and Delilah, the story of Samuel, David's defeat of Goliath, Israel's military victories, Elijah's conquest at Mt. Carmel, the predictive prophecies throughout Scripture, the Messianic prophecies, the Virgin Birth of Christ, Christ's Messianic consciousness, the Historical Jesus, Jesus'

miracles, Jesus' crucifixion and death, Jesus' resurrection, Jesus' post-resurrection appearances, His ascension, Peter's preaching, Stephen's vision and preaching, Paul's conversion and subsequent ministry, the miracles and signs displayed in the apostolic church, the phenomena of Scripture as Divine revelation, and Jesus' second coming and the establishment of a new heaven and new earth. Does he not know that many Christian colleges and seminaries, churches and denominations, have already traveled naively down the path he recommends to us? Does he not realize that we, as a denomination of believers, have tried to stay off this path to liberalism?

Perhaps the most telling results of adopting this methodology to arrive at truth are seen in its moral and social effects, in what has been called "situational ethics."

Because they let changing scientific opinion over-rule the Bible, many "Christians" now believe that abortion on demand is permitted. How do they arrive at such a conclusion? The consensus of the scientific community says that a fetus is not a person, but it becomes a person only when it is born. Only then does it have rights and the protection of the U.S. Constitution.

Similarly, many "Christians" now believe that homosexuality is a combination of sociological orientation and genetic predisposition. Because science tells them these things, the Bible is wrong when it calls homosexuality a result of sin, sinful in itself, an abomination, and a sexual preference chosen willfully and therefore deserving of eternal condemnation.

I call these people "Christians" only in a general sense, for I cannot understand how anyone who really believes that God created man in His own image could believe that human life at

all stages and in every condition is not stamped with the image of God. It is equally difficult to understand how someone who is a Bible-believing Christian can call homosexuality a normal sexual preference and dismiss the Bible's condemnations of it (Deut. 23:17; Rom. 1:26, 27). These "Christians" are not evangelicals. They are liberals. And as the late Francis Schaefer said, "Liberalism is secularism in theological language." And the liberal denominations and churches, which seem to enamour some of our most prominent denominational leaders, long ago dismissed any serious consideration of the Bible. They have been for more than the last 25 years in favor of an Equal Rights Amendment, abortion, homosexual members being members and mini-

sters in the Church, reverse discrimination ("Civil Rights"), banning prayer in public schools, and taxing Christian schools. Most social and political liberals are not irreligious and unfamiliar with a Christian heritage, but they have replaced it with secularism.

This is precisely what we face if we do not insist on a methodology which upholds the absolute and final authority of Scripture rightly interpreted. And by "rightly interpreted," I do not mean reinterpreted by higher-critical-slight-of-hand.

Calvin College and Seminary would like you to think that those who oppose Howard Van Till's freedom to teach by this method are attacking the College and Seminary. ("These conservatives are picking on us," they

squeal.) Thus, they try to arouse the latent sentiment and loyalty of the membership and ministers to rally to the defense of the College in the name of academic freedom. This is not an attack on the school, but an indictment of a method which totally relativizes the Truth of the Word of God. Our own salvation, as well as the future of our institutions, depends on maintaining the supreme authority of God's Word.

Rev. Stephen M. Arrick is the pastor of the Cornerstone C.R. Church of Hudsonville, Michigan. This is his reaction to the Oct. 27 Evolution debate at Calvin reported in this issue.

TEACHING EVOLUTION IN CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS?

A large crowd filled Calvin College's FAC auditorium the evening of Oct. 27, to hear and see the argument about how Christian schools should deal with the subject of evolution and creation. In the meeting sponsored by Grandville Concerned CRC Members physics professor Howard Van Till of Calvin confronted education professor Norman De Jong of Trinity Christian College in what was in fact a debate, although Van Till preferred to consider it a less confrontational discussion.

Dr. Van Till introduced his evolutionist (which he prefers to call "creationomic") perspective in substantially the same way as he did in his 1986 book, *The Fourth Day* by outlining the orthodox Christian doctrine of creation—that God created the universe and ourselves "made in His image," and continues to sustain, govern and provide for that creation. Praising the "artistic richness" of the Biblical account, he warned against regarding it as an answer to the ques-

tion of what really happened! For answers to that question, we must study evolutionary processes as informed by current scientific theories which claim the support of a wealth of evidence. These we must teach in Christian schools, and stop criticizing or dismissing them as contradicting the Bible. Faith and science are not at war and in this matter there is no "either/or."

Dr. De Jong recounted how he had been taught God's Word's account of creation and then acquainted with current theories, including assigned readings of Darwin, which contradicted it, in the light of the Bible's warning: "Do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1). That warning is especially urgent because of the gullibility of children and because of the stern warnings of the Bible against the eternal consequences of causing "one of these little ones... to stumble"

(Matt. 18:6). Our Lord said that it would be "better for" anyone guilty of such criminal behavior "that a heavy millstone be hung around his neck, and that he be drowned in the depth of the sea." The Bible warns us to be always on guard against being misled by the devil, especially when he comes as an "angel of light."

In the following exchange between the two professors, De Jong agreed with Van Till that science and faith are not at war, but, he insisted that that must not lead us to forget that there is, since Eden, a continuing war between God and the devil and those who are misled by him. That fundamental fact may never be overlooked by any Christian educator. God's Word must be our guide in telling us of beginnings which no man saw or could see. In that part of the discussion, and even more clearly when it was opened to the audience's questions, the irreconcilable rift between the speakers' views became ever more apparent. It surfaced espe-

cially on three points. (1) Van Till maintained that there could have been no universal flood during the lifetime of the human race because geologists had not found sufficient evidence for it (in spite of everything Genesis 7 and 2 Peter 3 say about it). (2) Death was in the world for millions or billions of years before there were any human beings (regardless of what Romans 5 and other similar Scriptures may say about that). (3) The creation of Adam and Eve "in God's image" may have been by way of a long train of animal ancestors. Van Till sought to buttress his promotion of evolution by appeals to Abraham Kuyper, Herman Bavinck and Augustine (although closer acquaintance with these church fathers reveals evidence of their contrary views). Although Van Till admitted that science is always inconclusive to the extent that it never has complete evidence, he insisted that we must be

guided by scientific opinion as the only guide we have in these matters. What must we do with the conflicting teachings of the Bible? Regarding such questions we must defer to the theologians who tell us the nature of the various kinds of literature in the Bible and what each is supposed to mean.

The public discussion, much of it of critical questions to Van Till, reached a climax when one veteran school teacher told of spending her many years teaching hundreds of children the early story of the Bible exactly as it is, never suggesting, "God didn't mean that." What was Van Till's reaction to that? His somewhat fumbling answer was that while he did not have the necessary experience to write for little children, we should focus on theological questions of who we are and our relationship to God, avoiding details such as timetables. Her reply

was, "I don't think that is the problem at all. It's a matter of accepting what is the standard by which we evaluate, Scripture or science!"

Although there was some evident support in the audience for Van Till's views, obviously many, especially if they had not read his books, were shocked at how bluntly he denied the events of the Bible's teaching whenever current scientific opinions did not support them. The meeting was the most dramatic public demonstration we have seen of the academic freedom that has come to be allowed Calvin's professors to teach whatever they please. And it plainly shows that the church schools (and the church synods which have conceded that freedom) are, in fact, no more submissive to the Bible's authority than are the state universities which taught them the theories which they teach.

PDJ

SCIENCE HELD HOSTAGE

During the Years 1984-5 Profs. Van Till, Menninga, and Young, all science professors at Calvin College, were study fellows at the Calvin Center for Christian Studies. The result of their studies was the collaborative effort published as *Science Held Hostage* (subtitled *What's Wrong with Creationism and Evolutionism*). How such an inflammatory title came from those who so stridently object to inflammatory language is not explained.

This is the author's attempt to overcome much of the antagonism and mistrust present in the current controversy over creation/evolution. This is an admirable and noble task since the controversy in our denomination presently rages largely due to the teachings of the authors themselves.

Their claim is that there has been a misperception. Too many people see

the controversy as a war between science and religion. The real war, we're told is between two forms of science, i.e. creationism and evolutionism. If it were up to the authors, religion would be left out of scientific discussions. Then science and religion could operate as partners, not enemies, in the quest for understanding ourselves and the universe.

The present impasse in the current debate over creation/evolution exists due to "the misperception about the nature of the professional scientific enterprise" (p. 10). Natural science is defined as the "investigation of what can be known from within the physical world itself, without reference to anything that is non-physical" (p. 19). Reality, we're told, consists of two realms, the physical and the non-physical. Science, when done well, deals with the former while the latter is ex-

Paul J. Murphy

amined by philosophy and religion. Good science (what the authors argue for) "sets aside the matter of the relationship of the physical world to any beings or realms of reality that transcend the physical world" (p. 19). Transcendent beings and realms of reality are not denied, rather "natural science chooses to remain silent on questions concerning the relationship of the material world to other realms of being" (p. 170).

It is thus maintained that the present controversy is not between science and religion since they respectively deal with different domains. The present controversy exists because creationists shout at evolutionists who in turn shout back, but who both are guilty of misrepresenting and misusing science. The authors maintain "one cannot employ natural science for the purpose of supporting

preconceptions drawn from one's philosophical commitments or system of religious beliefs" (p. 41). This is exactly what both creationism and evolutionism do, and in so doing, make science "bad" science. "In both cases, science has become indentured in the service of an ideological or religious commitment" (p. 153). "Science held hostage by any ideology or belief system, whether naturalistic (evolutionism) or theistic (creationism), can no longer function effectively to gain knowledge of the physical universe" (p. 41). It is maintained that if all parties involved in the debate were to recognize and respect the domains of science and religion, the controversy would largely cease.

In order to make a contribution towards that end the authors spell out the definition of natural science and the values with which they operate in the first section. This then is used as the criteria for evaluating creationism and evolutionism in the following sections. The bulk of the volume is spent discrediting both of the above. Basically, creationism is faulted for sloppy science which transgresses established scientific values in order to "warrant its belief in a particular concept of divine creation" (p. 153). Evolutionism is faulted for asserting religious conclusions about the origin and governance of the universe as if these were supported by science. The authors conclude with a section containing suggested questions for evaluating literature so as to avoid antagonism and determine validity in future studies.

The suggested method follows the basic distinction between two realms of reality. Science investigates the inherent intelligibility of the physical universe in the categories of physical properties, physical behavior, and formative history. It merely discovers what the world is like and describes it. Religion and philosophy provide the meaning of the universe, hence they are concerned with questions of origin and governance. "Each (domain) deserves to have its unique domains respected by the other" (p. 19). When science answers questions of meaning, origin, and governance or when religion makes assertions about formative history and physical behavior, boundaries have been violated and confusion and controversy result.

This bifurcation of reality into two realms, physical and transcendent, is the product of post-Kantian secularist philosophy. It is evident that each domain contributes different forms of knowledge (i.e. the physical yields scientific knowledge; the transcendent yields religious knowledge).

This allows us to see why the authors claim criticism of them is unjust. When they speak of evolutionary theory this is only speaking of formative history, i.e. the scientific, physical realm. They claim not to be in conflict with religion, for they still believe God originated and governs the world. They know this from the religious realm. However, what has effectively been done by dividing the field of knowledge is to restrict the area over which the Scripture has authority. Clearly, not science, but Scripture is being "held hostage!"

Scripture is the only infallible rule for faith and life; so we must see if Scripture limits the range of its authority. II Tim. 3:17 says Scripture equips man for every good work. Is that *only* religious works? Is not *all* of life religious? God tells us in Col. 1:18-20 that He has reconciled all things on earth *and* in heaven through Christ, so that He might have the supremacy. Christ is the "head over every power and authority" (Col. 2:10). Are Profs. Van Till, et al, asking us to believe that science isn't under Christ's authority, that Christ's Word is limited to transcendental matters? It would appear so; but, God tells us differently!

In fact, science does make pronouncements about God even when it limits itself to the physical domain. Ps. 19 tells us that creation declares God's glory and proclaims the work of His hands (v. 1). The sun in its daily course reveals God's governance (vv. 4-6). The entire physical universe reveals God to man, we're told in Rom. 1:18-20. Why doesn't science see this? God tells us that man "suppresses the truth in unrighteousness." There are none so blind as those who will not see. That science "chooses" to remain silent on the transcendent realm" (p. 170), is not an indication of integrity; it is a damning admission of guilt!

The authors condemn creationists for sloppy science, because they fail to take account of all the evidence (and rightly so). But then they want us to

follow the authority of their science when it willfully, and culpably, leaves out the largest and clearest piece of evidence-God Himself! It should be clear that the science our professors would have us adopt is not only secular; it is anti-Christian!

While I agree with the authors that science and religion need to work together for a better understanding of creation (a word the authors consistently, and consciously? avoid) and Scripture, I maintain that this can only be done when science is done on a Christian, not secular, basis with Scripture as the final authority.

These professors do not now adhere to their own principles. Based on their findings from science, which are merely *theories*, they want the church to reinterpret God's absolutely authoritative Word! So much for respecting religious boundaries! Science now tells us Gen. 1-11 is not history (H. Van Till), that Adam was *MAYBE one of the Neanderthals*, not the first man on earth (C. Menninga, *The Banner* Nov. 12, '84), that Bible texts *CAN'T* challenge scientific conclusions, despite their *theoretical* nature (D. Young in a speech at Calvin Seminary Sept. '87). This is plainly a case of "Scripture held hostage!" By adopting a secular philosophical basis, the authors have made an alliance with the world, but don't they know that "friendship with the world is hostility towards God" (James 4:4)?

The gospel of Christ challenges not only our morality but our intellectuality as well. Intellectual sin needs to be repented of as "we take every *thought* captive to make it obedient to Christ" 2 Cor. 10:5). God commands us to "demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God," not make alliances with them!

I ask my brothers to return to the sure foundation of the word of Christ (in whose light we see light). "All other ground is sinking sand." But from such a sure foundation we can work together to answer all our questions.

Mr. Paul T. Murphy who was a delegate at our church synod, is studying at Westminster Theological Seminary at Philadelphia, Pa.

A FRESH LOOK AT GENERAL REVELATION

Theodore Plantinga

(conclusion)

My own view begins with the thesis: *God does not approach man first of all as professor. Rather, He stands before man as Lord and as Judge.* Perhaps this sounds a bit irreverent to you; I hope not. The point I wish to make is that our community — the Christian Reformed Church more than other branches of Reformed Christendom — tends to approach many questions with a *professorial* frame of mind, rather than a *confessional* frame of mind. The study committee which the synod of 1988 established to “look into,” a range of issues that arise from the Van Till question illustrates my point. We no longer seem, *as church*, to be in the business of *confession*; instead, *as church-turned-college*, we “investigate” and “study.” Rev. Henry Vander Kam has recently made some valuable observations about this curious practice.

General revelation is not part of a lecture which God as the divine professor addresses to us. Rather, general revelation (I use the term here for the sake of brevity, although I would prefer to avoid it altogether) has the main purpose of making fallen man feel uneasy before a greater power; in other words, the revelation that we have come to call general revelation, of which Paul speaks in Romans 1, is not *informational* in character but stands within a framework of *judgment*. The heading in the Harper Study Bible rightly says “The Gentiles: Guilty before God.” The thought expressed in that heading is precisely Paul’s point. He indeed speaks in verse 19 of “what can be

known about God,” but he sets the context in the preceding verse: “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and wickedness of men....” We must not, then, think of general revelation as some sort of almanac. “So they are without excuse...” says Paul (vs. 20). General revelation must be understood within the framework of salvation and judgment.

“Creation Science”?

At this point you might yet be dubious about my claim that Diekema and company are using un-Vantillian arguments to defend Van Till. If so, I ask you to ponder Van Till’s attitude toward so-called creation science, an intellectual tradition and way of thinking that falls within the scope of what I have been calling natural theology. This tradition seeks to establish knowledge of God and His acts on the basis of an inspection of this world itself, that is to say, apart from Scripture or special revelation. Traditional natural theology (think of Thomas Aquinas) endeavors to prove God’s existence by beginning with human experience. And recent creation science tries to show that God is the Creator by reasoning in empirical scientific fashion from the givens of nature. Hence it seeks to include a so-called “scientifically established” doctrine of creation in public school textbooks.

Van Till and company maintain that creation science rests on a misconception — and I agree with them. Whatever we may choose to say about the doctrine of creation, I agree that it

is *not* the outcome of a process of scientific reasoning. When we confess that God is the Maker of heaven and earth, it is because He has revealed this truth to us.

My next conclusion is that it is a mistake to suppose that Van Till is simply dusting off the tradition we usually associate with Thomas Aquinas. When he says, in the new book, that we must “distinguish scientific matters from religious matters” (*Science Held Hostage*, p. 172), he leaves no room for drawing conclusions about God from the study of nature or physical reality; in other words, he rejects what I have been calling natural theology. And so, once we learn to see beyond the ill-chosen title and subtitle of *The Fourth Day*, we realize that for Van Till, *physical reality tells us nothing about God*. His slogan of “categorical complementarity” (see *The Fourth Day*, p. 205) means that science and religion represent two entirely separate areas of discourse that do not overlap. Therefore do not look to science to find out what God is like. And do not ask religion — or theology — to explain the workings of physical reality. Van Till says over and over that we have to be careful not to ask the wrong questions of science, on the one hand, or of the Bible, on the other.

At this juncture I must pause and underscore the point on which I agree with Van Till. When he faults the creation science people for trying to establish a doctrine of creation via normal scientific reasoning and argumentation, I am with him. (And so are a great many Reformed friends and col-

leagues of mine; indeed, I would maintain that the creation science position on this question had almost no support at all in Christian Reformed circles until fairly recently.) Where Van Till and I differ is that *he does not allow theology or the Bible* (I would like to speak of our confessions here as well) *to tell us anything about the nature of physical reality*; ultimately, he leaves the Christian community saying nothing about origins in the strong sense. (Bear in mind that for Van Till, the question of origins is to be distinguished from the question of “formation”: see pp. 20-21, 167 and 177-178 of *Science Held Hostage*.)

At the very outset I made it clear that I *disagree* with the idea that forms the pillar of the Diekema defense of Van Till, namely, *that one finds out what God is like by studying nature*. (Instead we find out what God is like via His revelation of Himself in Christ and in Scripture.) The Diekema defense involves a form of natural theology reasoning that I have been arguing against for years — most recently in the publications I mentioned earlier. (I have commented on the doctrine of general revelation on pp. 50-54 of *Contending for the Faith* and also on pp. 88-90 of *Public Knowledge and Christian Education*.)

Yet Diekema’s reasoning has a lot of appeal to conservative Reformed folks. (How else could we make sense of Henry Vanden Heuvel’s pilgrimage?) In other words, Reformed people right across the spectrum, from fairly conservative to fairly progressive, have long been accustomed to talking in expansive terms about *nature revealing God*. Appeals to Article 2 of the Belgic Confession, and to some language used by John Calvin (remember that Bavinck criticized him for this), will sound familiar to many of you.

Independent General Revelation: A Dangerous Error

Why is such thinking *dangerous* and *mistaken*? Let me spell out, briefly, two reasons. *First*, it has the effect of *giving science an independent voice in the church*. Such thinking in effect lays a new requirement on the church: before she may speak in the name of the Lord, she must consult not only Scripture but also science — which in practice means the Calvin College faculty. *Secondly*, the emphasis on revelation in nature (remember that

our specific knowledge of nature comes to us for the most part via what we call science) *takes away from the centrality of Scripture as the Word of God*, and therefore also undermines the centrality of preaching.

But now back to Diekema and Van Till. One of the curious features of the present situation, then, is that Diekema defends Van Till by using what amounts to un-Vantillian reasoning, namely, natural theology thinking. Perhaps this incongruity helps explain why Van Till has not been saying more in his own defense. The inner logic of his thinking is that the sharp split between science and religion (his terms — I would prefer to speak here of the “neutrality of science”) is the best defense. If we once accept his premises, criticism is quickly seen to be unfounded.

Who, then, is confused? Not just President Diekema, for the title of Van Till’s original book creates confusion. The heavens most emphatically do *not* tell us about God and His work as Creator; they tell us only about themselves, according to Van Till. In philosophical terms, Van Till’s position is that physical reality is “internally intelligible” (see *Science Held Hostage*, p. 42); that is to say, it makes sense in and of itself, without reference to anything non-physical beyond it. This, by the way, is precisely the thesis which Christian schools take such pains to deny, which is why one finds Christian school people complaining that *Van Till is undermining the Christian school movement*.

I think it will help to sort the objections to Van Till into two categories. Some of the objections are theological or perhaps creedal: they have to do with his use of the *Bible* and his failure to affirm fundamental Reformed doctrines, such as *creation* and *original sin*. These objections are the ones that have given occasion to official church concern and should continue to do so, in my judgment. The other category of objections could be called philosophical: his position on the nature of scientific knowledge is contrary to what our colleges and high schools have, by and large, been teaching for quite some time now. (Please note that these philosophical disagreements cannot be settled by appeals to the Three Forms of Unity.)

Van Till’s defense of himself is in terms of the second type of objection, in other words, he takes on the mantle

of philosopher. (I have no “professional” objection to his assuming this mantle, by the way; I would, however, point out that *the philosophy he is peddling cuts the ground out from under Christian education*.) Diekema’s defense of Van Till, on the other hand, is in terms of the first (theological) type of objection. In other words, Diekema responds to theological charges in theological terms. This seems appropriate, but the irony of the situation is that in doing so he uses ideas which Van Till himself does not accept. (Indeed, he attacks them.)

By now you are wondering what conclusions can be offered on the basis of such an analysis. Since I am in a sense preaching to the converted, that is, addressing people who basically agree with me in my deep concern at the impasse we have reached, I believe I can best wrap up this address not with an emotional appeal for anger or action but with an application of what I have already said.

The *first point* in that application is that we who call ourselves conservatives must be careful *not to slip into the expansive conception of general revelation* ourselves, for it winds up placing the seal of divine approval and authority on the pronouncements of scientists. If we make this mistake, we might just as well join the three professors in affirming that “...natural science chooses to remain silent on questions concerning the relationship of the material world to other realms of being” (*Science Held Hostage*, p. 170). Well folks, I have news for you: *natural science* as referred to here by the three professors simply does not exist — but *scientists* do. All such generalizations about “science” are really statements about scientists — how they think and act. To claim that science is neutral is to claim that the people who are engaged in science are neutral in their thinking and acting. Just when did Reformed people start believing such a thing?

Lest you think I am splitting hairs here, let me quote you another passage: “Science, performed with integrity, is eager to recognize its own limitations in both domain and methodology” (p. 152). Here the three professors even attribute feelings to this unreal abstraction called science!

Secondly, once we have achieved some clarity ourselves on what is wrong with the expansive view of

general revelation, we need to explain our concern patiently to denominational leaders—such as the folks who run Calvin College and *the Banner*. We need to make it clear to them why *scientists do not speak with an independent authority in church matters*. As we make this point, name-calling will do us no good, nor will it advance the cause to question or deny the personal integrity of the people we are pleading with. We must take at face value their claim that they do the things they do in an effort to serve Christ and His kingdom.

Thirdly, as far the professors themselves are concerned, there are two lines of action to be pursued. Within the framework of our system of church government, we should con-

tinue to press the case that *their position is not compatible with Reformed doctrine and the creeds*. There is still plenty of time to get this matter placed before the next synod.

The second line to pursue in relation to the professors is to *ask them why they wish to teach in Christian schools*. More pointedly, we should ask them *why in the world there ought to be separate Christian schools at all* if science is neutral and is not affected by the consequences of human sinfulness. When I was a child growing up in the Christian Reformed Church, I was taught that the fruits of mankind's rebellion against God extend to all sectors of life. No exception was made for scientists and their work!

It is my responsibility as a teacher of philosophy in one of our colleges to make the case for Christian education. I am hampered in that work by the position being taken by the three professors, whom I would like to regard as my colleagues and fellow laborers.

An abridged version of a speech presented at a meeting of the Reformed Fellowship held in Grandville, Michigan on September 29, 1988. Dr. Plantinga is a Professor of Philosophy at Redeemer College at Ancaster (near Hamilton), Ontario.

PETER BEYERHAUS AT CALVIN

(II)

Ecumenical Betrayal of Missions

Last month we reviewed the three Calvin Seminary lectures given by the professor of mission and ecumenical theology at Germany's University of Tübingen. In them he highlighted the need to restore the Bible's stress on repentance and faith in Christ to today's churches and their missions. We also reviewed his books published in 1971 and 1972 which eloquently developed the same theme. His emphatic summons to restore the Lord's gospel call to conversion to the center of missions, provoked violent opposition on the part of the leadership of the World Council of Churches, who were determinedly promoting an exactly opposite course.

The next year Dr. Beyerhaus published another book, *Bangkok '73*:

The Beginning or End of World Mission? Despite the orthodox sound of the theme chosen for the coming World Council conference, "Salvation Today," it speedily became evident that there was no agreement about what the slogan was supposed to mean. While evangelicals sought a return to the Biblical gospel of salvation from sin through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ, the council leadership was equally determined that "salvation" be given a radically different, "contemporary" definition of dealing with the problems of today's society, so that now "The world determines the church's agenda" (p. 26). Emilio Castro summarized the significance of the Bangkok conference on its last day, "We are at the end of a missionary era

and at the very beginning of the world mission" (p. 33). The ecumenical council's goal became more and more explicitly to seek "world liberation" by spreading Marxist revolution. In order to sell this radical revolution of missions the WCC leadership deliberately sought to prevent Biblical and doctrinal discussion of the subject of salvation and to make of the conference "an experiment in group dynamics" (p. 37), which it piously dubbed "the moving of God's Spirit" (p. 38). As Beyerhaus describes the disappointing experience of this conference, he was especially impressed with the way the whole program was fabricated to sell by psychological manipulation ("sensitivity training" or "brainwashing") the predetermined policy of the authoritarian, self-per-

petuating leadership. Although they were not totally successful in suppressing all individual discussions of more religious issues, they saw to it that final reports and conclusions reflected only their own secular social and political policy. Not surprisingly, one conclusion promoted was a proposal that sending missionaries to the third world be stopped. The lengths to which this anti-Christian development went, Beyerhaus noted, came out in the liturgy when "for the first time in the history of Christianity an ecumenical conference has here joined in rejoicing over the fact that someone had become an atheist, and that even 'by the grace of God!'" (p. 73), in the China evening a speaker called Mao "God's Messiah for the Chinese" and a posted placard read "God save China from 'conversion!'" (pp. 80, 81).

With such anti-Christian pressures coming from the WCC it is little wonder that evangelicals saw the Council proposals to discontinue missions as "acts of sabotage against the advancement of God's kingdom" (p. 109). They felt driven to renewed promotion of evangelism by means of their own separate Lausanne Conferences for World Evangelism.

Evangelical Revival of Missions: Lausanne

In the April 1987 *Evangelical Review of Theology* (pp. 169-185), Dr. Beyerhaus further traces these important church and missionary developments from the early 70s up to the present. His 16-page survey is entitled "Evangelicals, Evangelism and Theology, A Missiological Assessment of the Lausanne Movement." The July 1974 Lausanne gathering of 2700 spokesmen of evangelical churches from 150 countries to consider "World Evangelization" was a stirring event, hopefully more lastingly significant than many other meetings in our age of conferences. Beyerhaus characterized it as "a Decisive Breakthrough in the History of Evangelism." Instead of the increasing perversion of churches and their Gospel missions into more and more plainly anti-Christian social, economic and political programs promoted by irresponsible WCC bureaucrats, a multitude of Bible-believing Christians were unitedly trying to restore the Gospel to its central place in the churches and their mission to the world.

Beyerhaus welcomed this movement as it (1) drew divided evangelicals together (2) focussed their attention on their common calling to bring the gospel to the world, (3) directed their attention to considering *how* it must be done, and (4) sought to base this effort on its necessary foundation in God's Word and its doctrines. The writer saw its crucial affirmations about evangelism as:

(1) "*Revelatory*" — "The divine inspiration, truthfulness and authority of the Bible as the only infallible rule of faith and practice in Christian mission work."

(2) "*Soteriological*" — "Salvation" as "the forgiveness of sins through Jesus Christ and the reception of the liberating gift of the Holy Spirit." Although it envisioned social involvement in mission, it insisted that evangelism must always be given the "priority."

(3) "*Eschatological*" — "This gospel of Jesus must be proclaimed in the whole world as a witness to all nations before the end would come with the glorious return of the Lord Jesus to set up his kingdom in power (Matt. 24:14)." This Biblical vision must replace the "evolutionary and revolutionary concepts of world history" which the misguided Council had been shoving in its place.

Caution and Counsel for the Future

Although thrilled by this development, Beyerhaus also warned "that the future of the evangelical movement will entirely depend on the vigilance of its leaders to defend this position against new temptations, from which evangelicals, too, will not be exempted."

Tracing further developments since the conference, the writer observed that the leadership had resisted the temptation to build up a new centralized bureaucracy like that developed by the WCC. As Leighton Ford said, "Lausanne has become more than a place, an event, or a committee. It has become the symbol of a movement of likeminded believers who long to see the day when the Gospel will be preached to the whole world and the Lord will return." Its mission strategy has been to *organize converts into self-propagating, rapidly growing, indigenous churches*. A prominent feature of the recent developments has been the vast increase of missionaries sent out by third world, formerly mis-

sion churches. Since 1974 this number has grown from about 1000 to an estimated 15,000! At the same time missionary problems continue. In bringing the gospel to people of other cultures, we always face the need to distinguish between what is characteristic of the Lord's unchangeable gospel, and what is adaptable to various cultures! Unresolved differences between evangelicals in their views regarding the proper relation between the gospel and social action (which surfaced especially at a Grand Rapids conference!) were noted, with an observation that verbal agreements in conferences do not always show a real meeting of diverse minds. Despite differences of emphasis, the primacy of evangelization was maintained. Beyerhaus noted with special appreciation the emphasis of a 1984 Korea conference on the fact that in the spiritual battle with the demonic powers of heathen darkness our prayers to God must be kept in the foreground. (Our Lord warned, "Without me, you can do nothing," John 15:5.)

For the future, Dr. Beyerhaus stressed especially the need to be faithful to the "three basic theological affirmations... the normative authority of Scripture; the soteriological interpretation of salvation as reconciliation of sinful man with God; and the eschatological terminal of missions" (in the Lord's return). He saw this faithfulness confronted by three threats.

(1) The integrity of the gospel is threatened by a "*contextual*" interpretation which perverts it to serve the needs and desires of a particular time or culture. (2) The effort to bring a "*holistic*" gospel of "*word and deed*" ministry is misleading if it makes these two equal, so that socio-political action overshadows the forgiveness of sins and we end up again with another "social gospel." (3) A current trend of some to stress the gospel of the "*Kingdom of God*," while appealing, is apt to overlook the fact that our Lord spoke of that kingdom not as attainable by our social and political efforts, but only to be realized at His return in triumph over the satanic opposition.

Beyerhaus saw in some studied efforts to present the gospel in ways understandable (and presumably therefore acceptable) to non-Christians, a lack of "realistic insight that non-Christian religions and ideologies

are not only mistaken and illusionary products of human minds, or expressions of their thirst for salvation, but... incorporations of the spirits of God's enemies which finally join forces in the universal reign of the Antichrist." The optimistic vision of winning the world for Christ in our generation overlooks the fact that the Bible does not predict such a triumph of the missionary church in this present age. "Scripture promises us that this Gospel will be proclaimed among all nations until the Lord comes (Matthew 24:14), but it also shows that this witness will provoke resistance and hatred and persecution of the messengers and their converts as well."

The writer expresses his sadness at the way the church of the free world largely publicly ignores the plight of the persecuted brothers and sisters (apparently under the mistaken impression that such silence might prevent more persecution). His appeal for them recalls the Biblical injunction to remember the persecuted (Heb. 13:3). He reminds us that we all need to be prepared for the time "when suffering for Christ's sake will be the ultimate test of our faithfulness, carrying with it a decisive victory over the forces of the great adversary" as that is envisioned in Rev. 12:11, 12: "And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death. Rejoice then, O heaven and those that dwell therein! But woe to you, O earth and sea, for the devil has come down to you in great wrath, because he knows that his time is short!"

A Word for Us

It is startling to find such a perceptive and resounding Christian testimony as this coming out of a school early associated with Liberalism and from someone long and intimately involved in the ecumenical movement. We are often assured by some among us who have long been urging us to join "the mainstream" that our critical holding aloof arises out of our naive (ethnic) ignorance. From Dr. Beyerhaus in the heart of that movement, we get one of the most profound and comprehensive critical analyses of the current WCC movement and its fatal policy for missions that has yet ap-

peared. Although we may not share every nuance of his argument, we can only give an enthusiastic welcome to and learn from his stirring call for a renewed commitment to the gospel and its mission to the world.

One of the startling features of his case is that, although it was not at all directed toward our denominational circle, it, at many points contains the most impressive analysis and criticism we have yet seen of many of what we often consider our peculiar problems. One reason for that, of course, is that they are not peculiar to us at all, but really common problems of the churches in our time. Let's note some of them. 1. Most important is the basic problem, of playing ("hermeneutical") games with the Bible. Whenever anyone rejects or ignores its authority as God's Word in this way, he quickly finds that the rest of the current problems (of the WCC or CRC) follow. Then one soon gets the decay of missions, as the only saving message of our Lord's gospel is lost, to be replaced with the social and political Antichristian gospel of communism. As Beyerhaus shows, the gospel certainly has social and political consequences, but unless we keep the gospel of Christ and its call to conversion in the forefront, we lose it. 2. His warning against a coordinate "WORD AND DEED" ministry as a way to lose the WORD is particularly apropos, as we are still obviously trying to create that very thing in restructuring a mission-relief program.

3. The writer's observations about how the WCC has developed an independent bureaucracy which is not accountable to churches it is supposed to represent, manipulates them by political and psychological trickery and pursues its own social agenda, suggests only too clearly the political manipulation and hierarchical restructuring "for efficiency" currently going on in our denomination.

4. We too need his warning to evangelicals not to be trapped into an appealing crusade for a "Kingdom of God," that minimizes sin and the gospel of God's grace, and tries to ignore the ongoing battle with the forces of Antichrist that will continue through Christian testimony and persecution until the Lord's return.

The Lord's Holy Catholic Church

It is thrilling to hear and see this refreshing testimony to the authentic gospel coming from such an unexpected quarter. How does one account for it? Beyerhaus at every key point shows that he is committed to the message he brings and the stance he has to take because it is neither more nor less than the Word of God. When many people and even leaders are saying that our faith and life is always conditioned by the changing and diverse culture in which we happen to be, they really show their blindness to the reality of the Christian gospel. The Apostle Paul wrote to the Thessalonians (1 Th. 2:13) that he always thanked God that when they received the word of God from him, they received it "not as the word of men, but as it is in truth the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe." How often one discovers, whether in roaming across the centuries of history or traveling the miles of the world's geography, unexpected encounters with Christians whose faith and perspective is on fundamental matters, despite all trivial differences of history or geography, the same as our own! The blind try to equate that perspective with an "ecumenical" wiping out of all differences of faiths, only to discover, sooner or later, how lost they and their colleagues are. Those who, guided by God's Word and Spirit, share one Lord and His calling, discover their real unity in the faith and life of the gospel as His Church.

Elect from every nation, Yet one
o'er all the earth,
Her charter of salvation, One Lord,
one faith, one birth;
One holy Name she blesses,
Partakes one holy food,
And to one hope she presses,
With every grace endued.

Few came to hear Dr. Beyerhaus' remarkable plea (like that of a sometimes lonely Athanasius or Luther) at Calvin Seminary. May more read in these pages his reformer-call to return from today's antichristian perversions to the true mission of God's Word.

PDJ

A STATEMENT OF CONVICTION

I have loved the Christian Reformed Church all my life. Her Biblical and distinctly Reformed creeds and confessions clearly identify her and have been a blessing to me in my personal relationship with God and His Word. Therefore, the present direction of the Christian Reformed Church has been a tremendous grief to me. I find it difficult to believe that with such a thoroughly Biblical foundation, our church, seminary, and college could be misled by three Calvin professors, Van Till, Young, and Menninga who are not, and do not claim to be, our spiritual leaders. Many of our elected and appointed educational and spiritual leaders have rushed to the support of these professors and their method of Biblical interpretation.

My conviction is that the things discussed and argued to date are merely symptoms of the real issue we must ultimately face. The length of the creation days is not the issue; whether either side has enough love to hold thru disagreement is not the issue. Whether God is great enough to do anything that pleases Him is not the issue. The real issue is: Is God's Word truly and completely inspired? Can we believe *all* of the Bible or will we accept and believe only *part* of it?

These professors suggest that God would be "tricky" or "deceptive" if He meant for us to literally believe *all* that the Bible says, for that would contradict scientific evidence. This has terrible implications since it echoes the question Eve was asked in Genesis 1:3c, "Has God indeed said...?" I dare not judge how God responds to those who imply that He is "tricky" or "deceptive." Those are the Biblical word descriptions of Satan, not God. The Bible says that "God cannot lie" (Titus 1:2) and that Satan is "the father of the lie" (John 8:44). Everyone concerned about the Calvin professors' views should get a copy of the "Report of the *Ad Hoc* Committee," given at the February, 1988, General Board meeting of Calvin College. It can be obtained from your pastor or clerk, since every church was sent a copy.

Please give your prayerful consideration to an obvious and total disagreement between what they say and teach, and what God's Word, the Bible, says:

Jeremiah 29:19

"...Because they have not heeded My words, says the Lord, which I

sent to them by My servants, the prophets, rising up early and sending you them, neither would you heed, says the Lord."

Jeremiah 30:2

"Thus speaks the Lord God of Israel, saying: Write in a book for yourself *all the Words* that I have

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Dr. Norman De Jong and
Dr. Howard Van Till
on
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spoken to you."

I. They say:

The Bible is the "Word" of God, but not the "words" of God. This is their foundation on which all of their teachings rest. To them this means that the Bible contains the non-specific message of God; That many passages are just story or parable words (packaging) in which the Truth can be found; that these word packages are of less importance than the message contained. Thus they try to convince us that God has failed to give us a clear revelation of His Word and works. So, by whom or by what means are we to be led to the Truth? It thus becomes necessary for the "mind of man" to discern which words are God's actual message and which are just "packaging."

From the *Ad Hoc* Committee Report, page 4: "According to Van Till, Genesis 1-11 is the preamble and the first part of the historical prologue of the covenant, and he calls this part of the prologue 'primeval history'." The report continues by quoting from Van Till's book, *The Fourth Day*, page 83: "...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 the truth is of infinitely greater value than the vehicle or packaging in which it is carried....Though it [primeval history] is not to be taken literally, it is to be taken seriously."

But God says:

John 17:17

"Sanctify them by the Truth; Thy Word is Truth."

John 17:8

"For I have given them the words which You have given Me; And they have received them...."

II Timothy 3:16

"All Scripture is given by inspiration..., and is profitable...."

II. They say:

Moses could not possibly be accurate in the narrative, because he lived so long after the history he describes, and the truth could not have been accurately passed on by so many generations.

But God says:

Numbers 12:6-8

(In response to Aaron and Miriam after they spoke against Moses), "...Hear now My Words; If there is a prophet among you, I, the Lord, make Myself known to him in a vision, and I speak to him in a dream. *Not so with My servant Moses; He is faithful in all My house. I speak with him face to face, even plainly, and not in dark sayings; And he sees the form of the Lord. Why then were you not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?*"

Exodus: 33:11

"And the Lord spoke unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend...." Moses did not have to depend on any other persons or his own memory to be accurate, for God spoke plainly to him, face to face.

III. They say:

Adam was not necessarily *created*, but maybe Adam was born by a more primitive mother.

From the *Ad Hoc* Committee Report, page 2 (comments from interview with Prof. Menninga), "Maybe the dust is a figure of speech and maybe God formed Adam by enabling a more primitive mother to give birth to an offspring who possessed the image of God." In the same report, page 7, the committee says of Dr. Young, "It would follow, therefore, that although Prof. Young, in his published writings, has indicated that *Scripture compels us to accept a miraculous origin of man* (underlining mine, JT), he would wish to maintain some degree of openness on man's biological origin." From the same report, page 5, Prof. Van Till is quoted from his book, *The Fourth Day*, page 258: "I see no reason whatsoever to deny that the creation might have had an evolutionary history or that morally responsible creatures

(man, JT) might have been formed through the processes of evolutionary development."

But God says:

Genesis 2:7

"And the Lord formed man of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living being." Notice the two steps: The creation from dust, *then* the breathing of life into that creation.

Genesis 1:27

"So God created man in His Own Image, in the image of God He created him. Male and female He created them."

IV. They say:

Adam was "weak and vulnerable."

From the *Ad Hoc* Committee Report, page 2: "As a scientist, Menninga is not sure how Adam was formed. As a believer, he confesses that Adam, *though weak and vulnerable* (*emphasis mine, JT*), was made in the image of God and innocent of sin." In the same report, page 5, Van Till states in his book, *The Fourth Day*, page 258, "To consider the possibility that we are creatures, members of God's creation, whose capacity for the awareness of self, of God, and of our responsibility for obedience to divine mandates *has been formed thru a process of continuous evolutionary development does not strike me as inappropriate or incongruous or unbiblical*" (*italics mine, JT*).

But God says:

Genesis 1:31

"And God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was *very good*" (not weak and vulnerable).

Genesis 1:28

"So God blessed them, and God said to them; Be fruitful and multiply, *fill the earth and subdue it, have dominion* over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth." (Hardly the mandates of a weak and vulnerable man!)

V. They say:

The result of Adam's sin was not death, but "broken relationships."

But Gods says:

Romans 5:12

"Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death thru sin (notice the cause and effect relationship), and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned...."

Romans 5:17a

"For if by one man's offense death reigned thru the one...."

VI. If Adam was not created, but born he would bear the image of that "more primitive mother," not the image of God (even Jesus received His human or Adam's likeness from His mother, Mary, who bore Him).

And if death was occurring *before* sin, then Adam was just another step in the evolutionary development and would die as his forbearers did, without sin. We must also conclude that Adam was not created in God's image and there would be no need to be redeemed.

But God says:

Genesis 3:19b

"For dust you are and to dust you shall return." This is part of the curse resulting from Adam's sin; returning to dust was not Adam's original condition.

Genesis 1:27

"So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him."

VII. They say: The flood could not have covered the whole earth; Our scientific findings do not agree with God's Word.

But God says:

Genesis 7:19

"And the waters prevailed exceedingly on the earth, and all the high hills under the whole heaven were covered."

Genesis 8:9

"But the dove found no resting place for the sole of her foot, and

she returned into the ark to him, for the waters were on the face of the *whole earth*."

Psalms 104: 5, 6

"You who laid the foundations of the earth, so that it should not be moved forever, you covered it with the deep as with a garment; the waters stood above the mountains."

II Peter 3:6

"...Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished...."

God's Word is our authority. When we seek the answers to these questions from His Word, it consistently and firmly disagrees with what they are telling us. We must make a decision. Either we believe *all* Scripture is God's inspired Word and accept by faith those things which we cannot understand; Or, we accept their teachings; That God did not mean to have all His Word believed as inspired, and that "man's mind" must determine what parts of the Bible are truly inspired and what parts are to be considered merely "packaging."

To deny any part of God's Word is to deny God Himself - God the Holy Spirit is denied when any portion of God's Word is called "packaging," and they refuse to accept what II Timothy 3:16 says: "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable...." And when Peter writes in II Peter 1:21, "...But holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit," this obviously means that these men did not write their own words, but *only* what God moved them to write.

Can we accept the current teaching that only *part* of the Bible is God's Word and the rest merely *packaging*, and that God has left us without instruction or direction so that it is left to "man's mind" to lead us? God says in Hebrews 11:3, "By *faith* we understand that the worlds were framed by the *Word* of God, so that the things which are seen *were not made of things which are visible*." And Hebrews 11:6 says, "But without *faith* it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that *He is....*" They teach that *what they see or touch* in the created universe is to be believed *even if it disagrees with Scripture*, thus repeating their denial of God's in-

spired Word. However, God's Word reminds us of Jesus' admonition to Thomas in John 20:29, "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

Do we need to be concerned? Jesus Himself says in Matthew 10:33, "But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father Who is in Heaven."

I pray that we could all receive the same blessing as Christ's disciples did just before His ascension, when in Luke 24:44, 45, He said to them, "This is what I told you while I was still with you. Everything must be fulfilled that is written about Me in the law of Moses, the prophets and the Psalms. Then He opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures."

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A BLESSING TAKEN

Songs of praise and thanksgiving have been an integral part of Reformed worship through the centuries. In my own lifetime the old *Psalter* and the *Psalter Hymnals* of the 1930's and 1950's had served well. Now we have a new songbook, one for which I never sensed a groundswell of request within the denomination. Nevertheless, bureaucratic decisions within the denominational building mandated that we should have this new songbook. Now that we have it and use it, candor compels me to say that a blessing has been taken from me during worship services far too often.

Before I explain why, allow me to posit some examples from various fields of art so that you can understand my sensitivity. First, who would brazenly alter the colors and tones in the painting *The Night Watch* of Rembrandt now on display in the Rijksmuseum of Amsterdam? Who would have the gall to chisel on the sculpture of *The Thinker* of Rodin with the excuse it needed a little more symmetry here or there? What person has such audacity that he thinks another verse should be added to the fine poem of Robert Frost "The Road Not Taken"? What person is there who feels authoritative enough to alter completely the eulogy of Marc Antony in the play "Julius Caesar" by William Shakespeare? Yet, time and time again, I see such liberties taken with songs in the new song book approved by synod.

In the song "Blessed Assurance" by Fanny Crosby I see an added verse inserted into that song by another versifier much like the white frosting snuggled into an Oreo cookie. When we sang that song in a church service, I was stunned. Perhaps such things have been done on other occasions; nevertheless, as a former English teacher I feel such intrusions into the works of art of noted poets is a clear violation of respect and propriety. In several other songs where the poets have used pronouns such as "Thy," "thee," and "thine," the music committee of the new song book have ignored poetic sensitivities and in their place have substituted the pronouns of the street such as "you" and "your." It is most certain that if the poets of these original poems had meant to use "you" and "your" they would have since these pronouns were spoken in their own day. The poets, however, did not, for they must have felt that pronouns like "thee" and "thy" served better for the sound and rhythm of their poems. For over fifty-five years I have sung "My Jesus I Love Thee." Now I wonder when I will be asked to sing "My Jesus I Love You." To me who likes a little sugar in his coffee it would be like asking me to switch to salt in my coffee.

Too, in the former *Psalter Hymnal* the Psalms had their own separate division within the book. In the new songbook several excellent ones found in the previous *Psalter Hymnals* have been dropped, and many that are still

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used are interspersed throughout the book. So one is left with the feeling that this tactic is but a subtle step to remove the *Psalter* section altogether from future hymnals. We suffer a great loss now with this process of deletion and dilution of the Psalms. However, their final and complete removal will be a clear indicator how far we have departed from our Reformed heritage.

The new song book includes several children-like choruses better suited for song books in our elementary Christian schools. The hymns we sing as adult believers should have sound theological contents. Choruses of repetitive lines hardly effect this.

Other things could be written about this new song book; however, what has been stated expresses my greatest dissatisfaction with the book. Needless to say, the liberalism rampant within our denomination only proves that nothing is inviolable to its adherents.

PS. My strong feelings about this new songbook keep me from dignifying it with its own title. It amazes me that other members have not expressed their incense about this book. Perhaps some do not have a feel for words nor a sensitivity for propriety.

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