

The Presbyterian Guardian

VOL. 42, NO. 9 – NOVEMBER, 1973

THE WIND – John 3:8

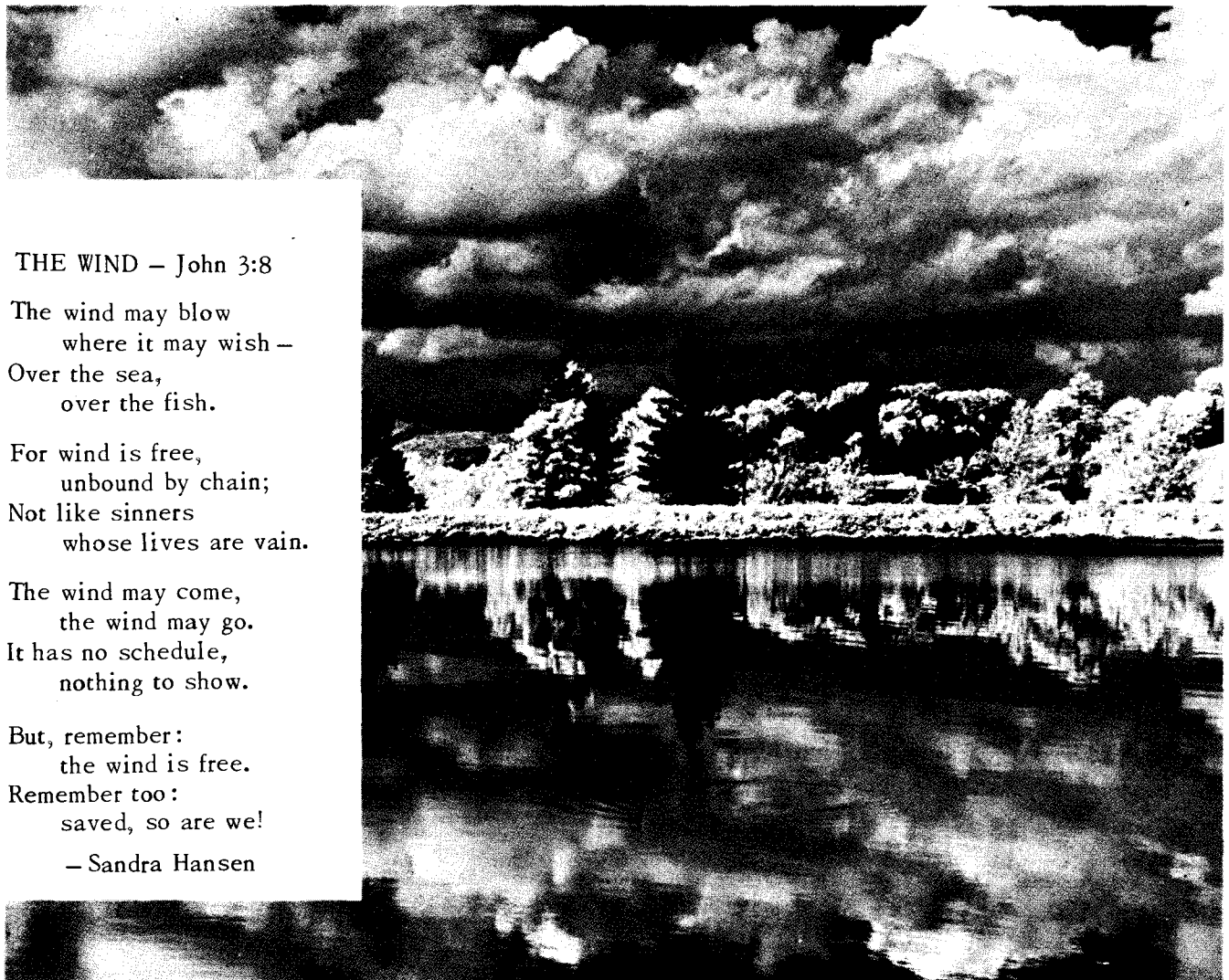
The wind may blow
where it may wish –
Over the sea,
over the fish.

For wind is free,
unbound by chain;
Not like sinners
whose lives are vain.

The wind may come,
the wind may go.
It has no schedule,
nothing to show.

But, remember:
the wind is free.
Remember too:
saved, so are we!

– Sandra Hansen



COVER POEM is by Sandra Hansen of Winner, South Dakota — where the wind is really free! Sandra wrote the poem when she was in the eighth grade.

Religious News Service Photo

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Words, Words, Words

NOEL K. WEEKS

The debate between those for and against the Philosophy of the Cosmomic Idea becomes quite confusing at times. For example, in the March 1973 *Guardian*, Dr. Bernard Zylstra made reference to a "third category" between the Creator and his creation that probably startled and even confused readers. Orthodox Christians have always believed in a Creator who created all things. But now we are told there is something else, the "Creator's law for creation." I receive the impression that this is neither Creator nor creature.

Bad exegesis

This came as such a startling revelation that I was eager to see the Scripture texts on which Dr. Zylstra based this idea. Amazingly, none of those he cites prove the point at issue. Hebrews 1:1-3 is supposed to show that the "word of power" that upholds the universe must be distinct from both the Son and the universe. With the same logic we could prove that Christ as the Word of God through whom all was created (John 1:1-3) can be neither God nor creation but must be something in between.

The passage that seems to come closest to establishing Zylstra's point is probably Psalm 119:89-91. But there is nothing here to tell us that the "word" in question is neither Creator nor creature but something in between. However, I might suggest an interpretation which seems to me to do most justice to the text. Other psalms express similar thoughts, as in Psalm 89:1-4: "In the heavens thou wilt establish thy faithfulness" — which in the context refers to the certainty of God's covenant promise to David. The point of Psalm 119 is the same; what God has spoken certainly comes to pass. Similarly, Psalm 33:6-9 speaks of God's commandment bringing the whole creation into being; but this does not imply that this "word" then takes on some form of independent existence between God and the creation.

Other passages cited by Dr. Zylstra are given equally bad exegesis. Deuteronomy 8:3 is turned to nonsense if it means that the people were taught by the wilderness experience to learn not to live by bread alone but by manna instead. The context makes it clear that it is God's commandments that are being referred to (verses 1, 2, 5, 6).

Other "words"?

A second question is whether these verses prove the existence of a word of God besides the Bible. Of course they do! This has never been the point at issue. Every believer knows that the Word in John 1:1 does not mean the Bible. The point at issue is the relation of Scripture to the Word of God in any other sense.

It is difficult to understand exactly what the proponents of the Philosophy of the Cosmomic Idea are saying at this point. Take for example the interpretation of Psalm 33:6-9: "By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, etc."

Of this Olthuis and Zylstra say (p. 120, *Guardian*, October 1972), "The Word of God is the very law-order of creation by which everything was created and by which everything is upheld to this day."

Do we really read about a "law-order" in Psalm 33:6-9? If so, what is the relation of this to Christ by whom everything was made (John 1:3)? Is Christ merely part of this "law-order"? Lest this seem an unfair question, it should be noted that Olthuis and Zylstra (on the same page) also say, "The Word of God is one. But since man's fall, that Word comes to us in a three-fold form." These forms are the "Word in creation," Scripture, and Christ. This raises the question of what this theory does not only with Scripture but with Christ himself.

What is meant?

Perhaps it is merely being said that these three "forms" are each properly called the Word of God. But I do not think this is the point. It could be that they are saying that Scripture does not exhaust this Word which is "the very law-order of creation"; but I still receive the impression that something else is being said.

It is disappointing that Dr. Zylstra, in replying to a criticism, attacks the formulations of his critic rather than seeking to clarify his own position. It would help if the members of this school would address themselves to this point. It may be they have been misunderstood; but surely this should be met with a clarification of the point at issue. I think we are being told that the Word in creation, Scripture, and Christ are each separate manifestations of something deeper and more basic. This is the point that needs clarification.

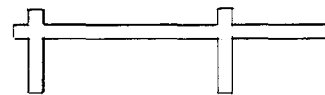
Finally, I would like to know what scriptural support there really is for this particular idea that the Word is God's "law-order for creation." That God gives commands to his creation is certain. There is a certain order in these commands, that order imposed by God's own nature and will. Yet once more I suspect that more is meant by this idea. From the fact that it forms an intermediate between God and creation, "law-order" implies much more than that God gave commands.

Let the reader consider the passages which have been brought up in this discussion and ask whether these are talking about God's commands, or whether they prove the existence of a separate entity between God and creation.

Noel Weeks is our occasional contributor from "down under" — and the ideas of the Philosophy of the Cosmomic Idea have reached into Australia as well as North America and the Netherlands. For further comments on this idea of a "third category," see Professor John M. Frame's article elsewhere in this issue.

The Presbyterian Guardian is published ten times each year, every month except for combined issues in June-July and August-September, by the Presbyterian Guardian Publishing Corporation, 7401 Old York Road, Philadelphia, PA 19126, at the following rates, payable in advance, postage prepaid: \$3.75 per year (\$3.25 in clubs of ten or more; special rate for "every-family churches" on request). Second class mail privileges authorized at the Post Office, Philadelphia, Pa.

WE HELPED A PRISONER



DOROTHY G. HAKE

I would like to share our personal experience and realizations regarding a former prison inmate whom I believe God has entrusted to us. In doing so, I hope to help individual Christians and the church as a whole to become more aware of the needs of people who have been largely neglected by the Christian church. These are the prisoners, the lonely, forgotten men and women behind gray walls, isolated from the communities that surround them.

Visiting Him in prison

God's Word reminds us to remember the prisoners. "Bring out the prisoners from the dungeon; from the prison those who sit in darkness" (Isaiah 42:7). "He does not despise his own that are in bonds" (Psalm 69:33). "Come forth. He who has pity on [the prisoners] will lead them and by the springs of waters guide them" (Isaiah 99:9). And Christ himself will reject or accept us for our failure or our faithfulness in visiting Him in prison.

Our own prison interest was aroused when a young mother in our town was stabbed by her husband. Many rushed to meet her needs and those of her five children. But strangely, it was her husband in prison who weighed on my conscience. What of him?

This growing concern led to a visit of the nearest state prison. I was able to go through it with a criminology class as part of an assignment for a graduate course in community services. Group arrangements usually have to be made for such visits.

I was appalled by the large adult men struggling over first-grade reading courses in literacy classes. There were too few teachers for the classes being attempted. Nor was there any counseling staff. Sex criminals were the only ones receiving psychological attention. There was a sixty percent return rate to this prison after release because of inadequate rehabilitation services. Many will commit a small crime to get back in because they cannot face the stern reality of making it alone in the world outside.

What can be done

As our concern progressed, my husband and I met with the prison chaplain to learn what we might do. It was suggested that we give books and magazines, so we checked over our library. Also at the chaplain's suggestion, a small group from our church joined a regular Tuesday evening Bible study group at the prison chapel and presented a Christmas program.

We came away having received more than we had given—as is often the case in such ventures! We found a small dedicated congregation of Christian prisoners who had been praying earnestly and studying their Bible faithfully with the help of this dedicated group that met with them each week. The prisoners' simple testimonies of faith and their great appreciation of God's forgiveness made a moving experience. To show

their gratitude to us, five young men prepared a vocal number for us and sang it with grace and beauty. We had a wide gamut of theological background in that little prison chapel, but there was a oneness of spirit.

Although the "congregation" had to be marched back to their lodging places immediately, we had a brief moment to meet in person one particular inmate. This was the man with whom my husband had agreed to correspond.

It is our relationship over the last three years to this man that has been the most rewarding. That first evening our worlds were miles apart. But "Bob" has progressed from being a prisoner, a convict, a man with a number, to a respected citizen in our town and a close personal friend of our family.

Help through letters and visits

We gradually became better acquainted through letters and visits to the prison. "Bob" was studying his Bible through a correspondence course. He was reluctant to admit his past, but seemed to want to be honest with us concerning it.

His background is perhaps typical of many others. His childhood was spent in a Baptist orphanage. Although he received very strict religious training, he remembers injustices that led him into a pattern of running away. This pattern followed him through his teen years when he felt the injustice of working in foster homes only to have someone else receive the pay he had earned.

He continued on this lonely turbulent path until finally an act was committed that merited imprisonment. Injustice followed him as his sentence was extended from three years to eight because of the intervention of people whose concern for their own welfare was greater than their concern for his.

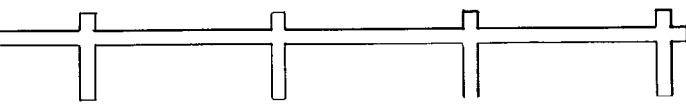
But as Bob's parole date loomed on the horizon, our being able to offer the assurance of a room at the local YMCA and a job at a convalescent center may well have persuaded the parole board to release him.

Helping after release

In the year and a half that "Bob" has been out, he has held this job and received promotions—a first in his erratic work pattern. He has been honest in paying back some necessary short term loans. He has been very respectful of us, and has never taken advantage of our hospitality. He said our birthday cake for him was his first. His appreciation for having a doorbell he could ring when he needed it has been expressed.

These eighteen months have not all been uphill. At first, he felt uncomfortable even sitting down at a family dinner table because the experience was so new to him. Many of the mistakes made were ours and not his. We all had a lot to learn in attempting this venture.

Although we brought him to church with us and he began membership classes, he has not continued. We



may at times have been more concerned with his material than his spiritual needs. Although this story has not ended, we feel it has gone far enough for us to feel confident that God will see the work to completion. We are convinced that the gospel of Christ is the only real possibility for reform of prisons or prisoners.

What you can do

So what can Christians do? Could we make it our goal to have a church in every prison and a Bible class in every local jail?

Could we plan to stock prison libraries with Christian literature?

What if we could have a Christian counseling service in every prison! (It is in our jails that much crime is bred as inmates wait out their sentences. And there are only fifty full-time psychiatrists for all of America's 426,000 prisoners.)

Do we include prisoners on our weekly prayer-meeting lists?

Could Christian programming be made available to prisoners over the radio headsets provided for them?

Do it in the Lord's strength

As for individuals, I would advise that no one enter into a prisoner relationship without seeking God's guidance first. He may have some other work for you, some other task better suited to your gifts. But I am sure that God does mean for many to enter this work, to show forth God's love through foster homes, work with juvenile offenders, or through prisoner rehabilitation programs.

But if this is what God has fitted you to do, you must also learn to trust in God for strength to do it. You cannot help a person unless you can accept him fully as a person made in God's image. Then you can move to meet his needs. Meeting spiritual needs must often be in parallel with providing for other needs.

For example, you may be able to hire a parolee or persuade someone else to do so. One poll shows that 43% of all employers would refuse to hire a parolee. You must be available for the parolee to talk to. Offer him friendship, a place to visit and feel at home in, and wholesome recreation. And there are particular needs for each individual; a lawyer friend was able to secure a driver's license for "Bob" and also managed to have dismissed an old lawsuit that could have cost him up to \$10,000.

I sincerely pray that God's Spirit will lead many Christians to carry out the injunction: "Be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven you" (Ephesians 4:32).

The Richard Hakes are members of Covenant Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Burtonsville, Maryland.



Thirty years ago Thanksgiving morning dawned in the Pacific. It was 1943, and a young soldier sat on an island with the stillness and stench of death all around. As he watched the early morning rays of the sun spread yellow fingers across the eastern sky, one of his buddies came walking by, half crazed by the war. A Japanese carbine was flung over his shoulder and he had a fistful of Japanese money in the other hand. The seated soldier looked around that morning and asked himself, "What's there to be thankful for? What in the world is there to be thankful for?"

As I scanned the newspapers in recent days, I wondered if that same question were not crossing the minds of many people today. Tropical storms bring destruction and death. Drought is killing thousands in sub-Saharan Africa. Riot and revolution bring their toll of dead and maimed. A plane crashes killing all on board. Violent crime, murder, armed robbery, rape, is no longer limited to innercity slums. What is there to be thankful for?

There is something!

Yes! Yes, says God. Yes, says the apostle Paul. There is something to be thankful for. Thank God, says Paul. Thank God for what?

There are countless things—and Paul says gives thanks in every thing. The news isn't all bad, though it often seems so. There have been wonderful advances in medical science. Many died in Viet Nam, but many more are spared the need to go there. Many of those who were wounded are being helped to overcome their injuries because of technological progress.

It's great to be alive today. Sometimes we take too much for granted. We have so much — more leisure, more labor-saving helps, and despite all its flaws, we still live in a land of freedom. Our liberty and our abundance have been bought with the price of many lives and much blood. But we are free to gather to worship. We must be grateful to God for that.

And there are all the beauties of the world that God has given us. Men pollute the land, the water, and the air; but the beauty of God's handiwork is still apparent. I lived in Florida most of my life and did enjoy the tropical beauty and color; but there is nothing there to compare with the scarlet, gold, yellow, and bronze that are seen in the Tennessee hills. We miss so much because we're fussing and grumbling, griping and complaining. We need to look out and see the Lord's world. It is something to be thankful for!

What's there to be thankful for?

In every thing give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. — 1 Thessalonians 5:18.

LUDER G. WHITLOCK

There is more yet!

There is more to a Thanksgiving message than this. Paul says we can have a spirit of gratitude and thanksgiving this week of the year, but also at all times of the year — regardless of the circumstances. Despite all the evils that occur, all the crises in the land, all the pain and tragedy we experience or know about, we can still be grateful.

This is hard for people to see. Favorable circumstances are not a prerequisite for thanksgiving. Material prosperity is not necessary for us to have grateful hearts before God. But we *can* see this when men of God lift their hearts in praise even while snared in the deepest affliction and trouble. It was Paul who wrote, "In every thing give thanks, for it is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." And it was Paul who wrote it from within a dungeon, with chains on his arms and legs and guards on all sides. It was Paul the prisoner who said, "I praise God for every single thing that happens, even my bonds and chains."

Jonah gave thanks to God — when he was *inside* the whale. Our Pilgrim fathers gave thanks to God in the midst of freezing and starvation. Everything need not be pleasant and pretty before we can be thankful. Paul says we are to praise God anyway! We are to have thanksgiving in our hearts in spite of all the difficulties, problems, and pains.

Thanks for the difficulties

In fact, we are to rejoice and give thanks for the troubles and difficulties themselves. "My brethren, *count it all joy* when you encounter various trials. When problems come your way, rejoice." So James addressed his Christian readers. And Paul could glory in his infirmities, could be glad for the things that other people complained about. Was there a "thorn in the flesh"? Paul rejoiced in the grace of God given him to overcome that thorn. This is what we all must do as Christians.

Give thanks to God who makes us more than conquerors. Give thanks to our God who gives us the victory over all obstacles. Give thanks to God for the unspeakable gift of salvation in Christ Jesus our Lord. It is this spirit of thanksgiving, this Christian virtue of gratitude to God, that has made Thanksgiving Day a national holiday in this country. If it were not that Christian attitude of grateful thanks to God for all his grace and goodness, there would be no Thanksgiving Day this year. For it is this basic heartfelt gratitude to God that lifts us above the plane of ordinary human behavior.

Thanks for being thankful

This is also what makes humans more than animals. There was once a young freshman in a large secular university who was being "rushed" by a fraternity. At dinner in the frat house, he paused to bow his head and thank God for the food. He never thought a thing about this simple act. But the table became quiet and when he raised his head, the silence became a volley of laughter. "Is that what you learned back home? Does everybody on the farm do that?" The young man blushed slightly and then said quietly, "Well, no, the hogs don't!"

Hogs don't give thanks. Neither do people who live and think like animals. "The ungodly neither recognize God nor do they give thanks to him" (Romans 1:21). Such people have become hardened in their hearts, joyless in their lives, full of hatred for God and even for themselves. There is no spirit of thanksgiving, no spirit of thankfulness in all the circumstances of life.

The soldier on the Pacific island came home from that war. Since then he has learned what there is to be thankful for. He has learned of the grace of God in Christ Jesus to lost sinners. He now belongs to a Presbyterian church in Florida, and teaches in a college there. He has so much for which to be thankful. Most of all, he can be thankful for the love and mercy of God through Christ the Savior, and for the Spirit of Christ in his life that has taught his heart true gratitude.

If you can find nothing in your heart for which to praise God, if there is nothing for which to give thanks, then as the psalmist said, "May my right hand lose its ability and may my tongue stick to the roof of my mouth." For if that is the case with you, then you are sour, bitter, a prodigal child mired in the mud with the swine.

"God is great and God is good." And God has been good to his own through Christ Jesus. Blessings abound, even in the midst of affliction. For "all things work for good to those who love God and are the called according to his purpose." Salvation through Christ; a new heart of grateful love through the work of the Spirit. In everything whatever, let us give thanks to God — for this is his will by Christ for us.

The Rev. Luder G. Whitlock is pastor of the West Hills Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Harriman, Tennessee. This sermon is adapted from one preached to the congregation some years ago.

Was Phoebe a Deacon ---- No?

THE EDITOR

I commend unto you Phoebe our sister, who is a deacon of the church that is at Cenchrea, that you receive her in the Lord, . . . and assist her in whatever thing she may have need of you; for she herself has also been a helper of many, and of mine own self (Romans 16:1, 2, according to one possible translation).

In last month's *Guardian* the editor presented the case made for ordaining women as deacons. To argue for women's eligibility to the diaconate is *not* necessarily to argue for her eligibility to the office of minister or ruling elder. It is solely a question concerning the office of deacon.

In examining the evidence, I sought to state the case as persuasively as it can be made. This month we look at the other side of the issue. The same Scripture passages are of principal concern to us.

Significant Scripture passages

Again, we give the crucial texts and emphasize those words or phrases that are of greatest interest.

"I exhort Euodia, and I exhort Syntyche, to be of the same mind in the Lord. Yea, I beseech thee also, true yokefellow, help these women, for *they labored with me in the gospel, . . .*" (Philippians 4:2, 3).

"I commend unto you Phoebe our sister, who is a *servant* [or *deaconess*, or *deacon*] of the church that is at Cenchreae. . . ." (Romans 16:1, 2).

"*Deacons* in like manner must be grave, . . . *Women* in like manner must be grave, . . . Let *deacons* be husbands of one wife, . . ." (1 Timothy 3:8-13).

"Let none be *enrolled* as a widow under threescore years old, . . ." (1 Timothy 5:9-16; cf. Titus 2:3-5).

(All Scripture quotations are from the American Standard Version.)

The burden of proof

Too often we modern Christians suppose that only in our generation is the Holy Spirit getting around to giving the church the full truth. We seem to forget at times that some of our traditions in the church come from Spirit-led men like Augustine, Calvin, or the Westminster divines. We ought not to despise a tradition just because it is a tradition; after all, the Spirit has been with the church ever since Pentecost.

This is not to say that every tradition is infallible truth. It is to say we ought to be quite cautious before junking it. There ought to be solid biblical evidence before we abandon the tradition of not ordaining women as deacons, a tradition followed by all Reformed and Presbyterian churches until quite recently. In fact, we need a clear demonstration that

our spiritual fathers were wrong, that God did intend for women to be official church deacons.

Reexamining the evidence

In last month's presentation, the crucial Scripture passages were seen as supporting the case for ordaining women as deacons. But were those interpretations the right ones?

For example, 1 Timothy 5:9-16 (together with Titus 2:3-5) was held to suggest that certain women did have an official position in the New Testament church. These elderly widows were "enrolled" and apparently received financial support. But it is by no means clear that they held, or even were retired from, a church office. On the contrary, in 1 Timothy 5 Paul is discussing several cases of the needs of the elderly. And certainly support for elderly widows, truly "desolate" or "destitute" (verse 5), is a Christian duty. And Paul's exhortation to elderly women in Titus 2 does not contain anything that must be understood as being part of an official service.

Similarly, though Euodia and Syntyche are said to have "labored with me in the gospel" (Philippians 4:2, 3), this certainly does not mean that they were officially apostles as was Paul. Everything, by word or act, that a Christian does to communicate the gospel to others is a "laboring" in that good news of salvation. To labor with Paul does not have to mean labor in a distinct church office.

Then in 1 Timothy 3:8-13, we find "women" mentioned in the middle of a section that sets forth the qualifications for deacons. This is thought to show that both women and men might be deacons. But the word translated "women" could also properly be translated "wives" (as in the King James Version). In that case it would certainly be referring to the wives of deacons (male). And if that interpretation is followed, the passage makes perfectly good sense according to the understanding of it that has prevailed for generations.

All we have tried to do so far is show that these passages do not prove anything about ordaining women as deacons. It is possible to interpret them as suggesting that possibility, but by no means is this the only acceptable interpretation. The reader should go over the passages again and, trying to exclude preconceived notions, endeavor to understand which interpretation was meant by the Spirit.

What about Phoebe?

Still, if Paul calls Phoebe a *diakonos* (in Romans 16:1), doesn't that prove the case? This much is undisputed: *diakonos* is the spelling of the masculine word that is used of male-servants (in its general meaning) and of church deacons (in a special meaning). If Paul uses a masculine word of Phoebe (when a feminine spelling was readily

available for a female-servant), is he not saying that Phoebe was a church deacon?

The trouble with this argument is that *diakonos* is not always a masculine noun. It was also a feminine noun, even though spelled exactly like the more common masculine form. In other words, *diakonos* could mean simply that Phoebe was a servant in the church of Cenchrea, and not necessarily a church deacon. (This rather confusing fact can be confirmed by a standard Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament.)

It is quite possible that Phoebe was someone quite special in that congregation. She may have been the "servant" of the church by way of donating her home as the place for worship. She may have been the Dorcas there, a woman who served others well beyond the usual. And it may be that she came to Rome in order to carry out some particular service of mercy needed there. But we are not required to understand *diakonos* as meaning that Phoebe was an ordained deacon of the church at Cenchrea.

Officers as gifts of Christ

So far, the case for ordaining women as deacons is not conclusively proved. The various texts that might be interpreted to support the case are all capable of interpretations that do not support it.

We could leave the discussion at that on the grounds that we need a more conclusive demonstration of Christ's will for his church before we presume to act. But there is more to be said to confirm the case *against* ordaining women as deacons.

It is not a matter of finding some proof-text. Paul forbids a woman to teach or usurp authority in the church (1 Timothy 2:12) which clearly bars her from the teaching or ruling office. But to show a scriptural argument against her being a deacon requires a broader approach.

One major consideration for us is the significance of the church offices. We sometimes suppose that being made a church officer somehow gives that person certain qualities of authority or superiority he would not otherwise have had. But this is not the New Testament concept of church office. What we call "offices" are actually persons whom Christ has given to the church. He "gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers" (Ephesians 4:11; cf. 1 Corinthians 12:28, 29).

Christ did not give certain offices to the church; he gave certain men with certain qualifications to perform certain services. To these men were given gifts fitting them for their special service; but the men themselves are spoken of as gifts to the church.

Officers as representatives

These men given as gifts by Christ to his church are given to be representatives of the Head to the Body. Throughout the New Testament, those who were apostles, prophets, and the like, are spoken of as apostles *of Christ*, fellow laborers *with God*, ambassadors *for Christ*. What they do as apostles, prophets, teachers, pastors, or deacons, they do for the Lord, the King and Head of his church.

To be ordained is not to be equipped with some authority of one's own. Whatever authority is rightly there is the authority of Christ himself. The preacher proclaims the Word of Christ. The ruling elder rules Christ's body for the King. The deacon ministers mercy in the name of the merciful Savior.

Now it is true that church officers do, in a sense, represent the congregation of believers. But that representation is not a republican form of authority. Each church officer, even though he acts in behalf of the congregation, is by that very fact acting in behalf of Christ's body the church. He is in his official ministry a representative of the Lord.

The headship of Christ

The Lord Jesus Christ is the *Head* of his body, the church. And the various church officers are Christ's gifts, his representatives to that body. But it is precisely because of Christ's headship, and the officers' character as Christ's representatives, that makes it appropriate for men only to be given to the church as officers.

There is a created difference between men and women, and that difference is seen most clearly in the concept of headship. All the other differences, physical, or psychological, are complementary to this basic one. And it is the husband who is "the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church" (Ephesians 5:23 and following verses). God created us so, the man to be a head over the woman even as Christ is over the church.

Perhaps we do not see this as clearly as we should. Every believer, male or female, must stand before Christ in a submissive role—yes, a feminine role. Perhaps that is why so often the church has more women than men in it. But in any case, men must think in a womanly way when they appear before the Lord.

At the same time, those who serve the church as Christ's representatives must serve as the representatives of the Head of the Body. Such a role is only suitable to men, for women are not to assume headship over men. We are dealing here, not with some cultural differentiation between the sexes, but with a God-created and Scripture-taught distinction.

It is of course true that deacons, more apparently but not more basically than other church officers, are servants to others. But they are servants as was Christ, who came not to be served but to serve others. Still, service even as humble and humiliating as Christ's is not a contradiction of the headship of Christ. It is as the Head of the Body that Christ serves his church. And it is as the representatives of the Head that the deacons minister mercy in Christ's name to those in need. As Christ's gifts and representatives, deacons ought to be men.

More to be said

Whether women should be ordained as deacons or not, there is a great deal more to be said about the biblical view of women's proper role in the church. Scarcely anything has been said about this in these articles. The *Guardian* would welcome your reactions on the question of women as deacons, but also your insights into Scripture's teaching on women in the church of Christ. Some may feel that this is opening up Pandora's box. But there is scarcely any subject today that demands of us more immediate Scripture study than this one.

Male or female, though, we all tend to approach a "sensitive question" with our subconscious biases and intuitions on defensive alert. The Spirit of Christ was and is his first gift to the church. We need to pray for the Spirit to open the Scriptures that our eyes may see and our hearts accept the will of our Lord and Savior for us.

— John J. Mitchell

Letters

No "thanks for the memory"

At the risk of incurring the wrath of church romantics who have adopted the messianic goal of cramming 1000 Bible texts into the sin-depraved forresses planted on top of children's shoulders, I would like to quibble with Eppinga's homily on the virtue of Bible memorization (in the June/July *Guardian*).

I suppose it is reward enough for some to hear of war prisoners who reconstructed the Bible from the dimmed memory of their Sunday school days. And nothing is more "convincing" than the death-bed recall of the most memorized passage of Scripture. For me, however, being something of a skeptic at heart, such scenes raise nothing but questions.

Where was this stored energy before the soldiers found themselves in prison, or the parishioner on her deathbed? Why must (or does) recall of texts tend to surface almost exclusively in stress situations? Is this the sole benefit to be derived from Bible memorization?

Now I don't want to be misunderstood. Recall of memorized Scripture in response to a stress situation is certainly better than nothing; and such a response in stress is a far better use of memory than the instant retrieval displayed to "earn" a trip to summer camp. But one wonders what differences it would have made in the lives and actions of our soldiers if they had recalled some of the simplest Sunday school verses (let alone reconstruct the Bible) before they embarked on their journey of destruction and killing. You know the ones, like: "Love your enemies, and do good to those who despise you"; or, "If you love me, keep my commandments."

Perhaps our behavioristic (stimulus-response) educational techniques, which encourage us to make such a sanctified use of our children's memories, are also responsible for the fact that recall of those memorized texts only occurs in a stress or reward situation. Little evidence of catechetical acumen exists during the in-between times where most people live their lives.

It also seems obvious to me why children are capable of such fantastic memory feats when it comes to baseball. Any keen observer of childhood immediately recognizes that the child's ability to memorize is directly related to the amount of bubblegum he buys, the time he spends watching ballgames on the "tube," and the number of bull sessions he has with family and peers related to the subject. In short, his memory is directly proportional to the use he makes of the knowledge stored under his ball cap.

When it comes to Bible and catechetical memory, I fear that we are afraid to allow children to use what they have been forced to learn. Even more to the point, we are afraid to allow them to use it in a child-like manner. If a kid "turns the other cheek," we tell him, "That's nice; but

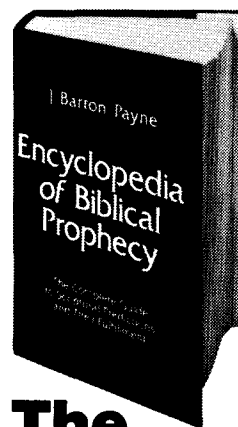
About Payne's "Biblical Prophecy"

The *Guardian* accepted the ad for Dr. J. Barton Payne's *Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy* because we agree that the book is important. But we do not endorse the methods of interpreting prophecy employed by Dr. Payne. The author clearly distantiates himself from the interpretative methods followed by men like Geerhardus Vos, O. T. Allis, and E. J. Young. A more detailed review of this book will appear in a later issue of the *Guardian*.

you do have to learn to defend yourself." When he talks, in a child-like manner, about God and especially Jesus in a (confessionally) mixed audience—including the boss from work—we hush him up.

As children become teenagers and begin asking biblically informed questions about the behavior of their elders in business or society, they are clobbered with an authority hammer and told they don't understand what life is all about.

It is clear what many believe: It is desirable to memorize all the Bible you want as long as you don't upset the lifestyle of the child, or more importantly, that of his parents, his church, or his nation. In adopting such a position, recall of memorized information can only occur in stress situations. In the end, I agree with Eppinga to this extent: "The ability to remember is a wonderful gift of
(Continued on page 138.)



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—Harold Lindsell, Editor, *Christianity Today*

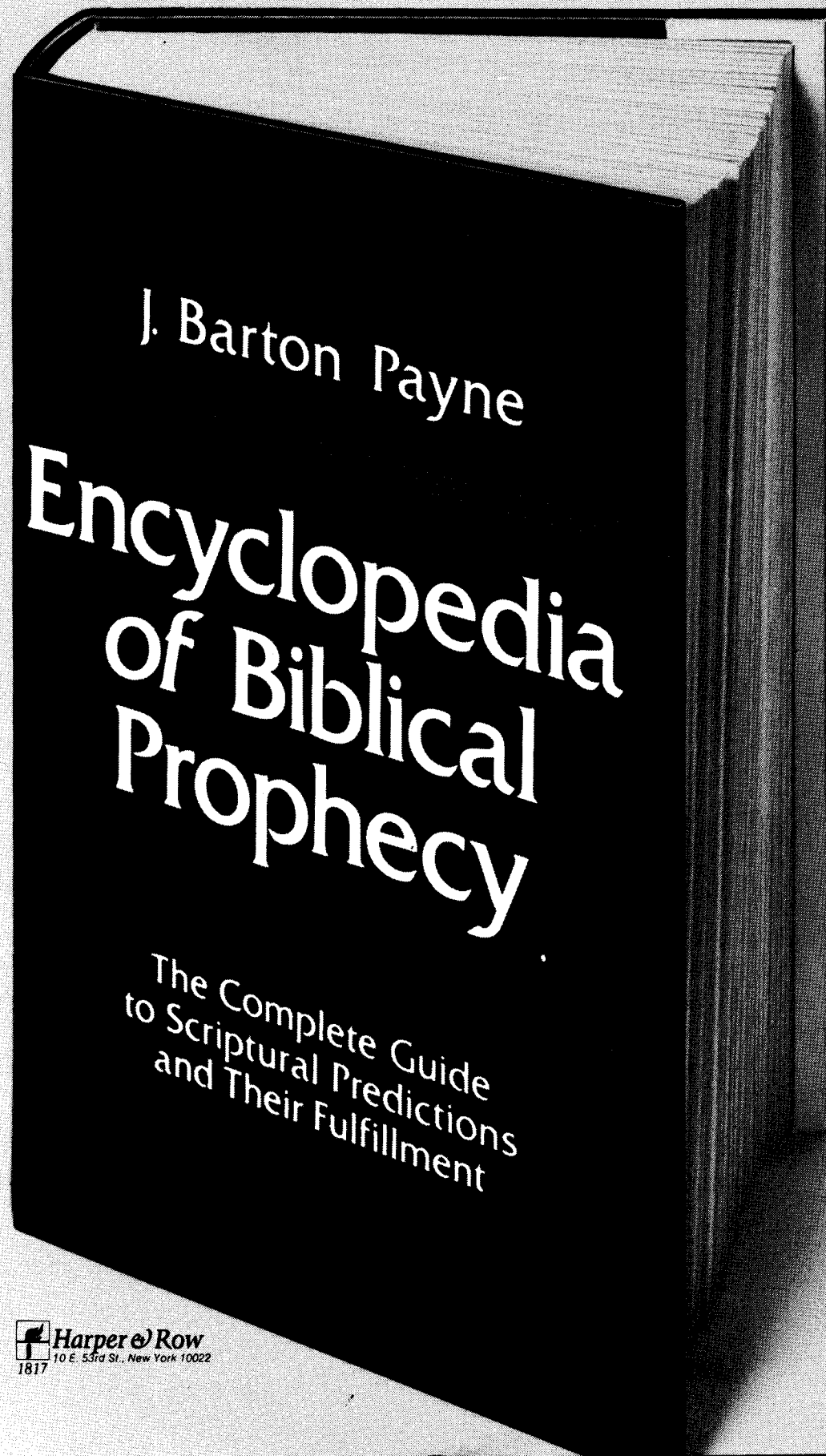
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(Continued from page 136.)

God. . . . But like faith, it strengthens with exercise — while it atrophies with disuse."

Robert T. Tuten
Somers Point, N.J.

That R P "heritage"

[In the April 1973 issue of the *Guardian*, Dr. J. Barton Payne of Covenant Seminary in St. Louis, welcomed Orthodox Presbyterians to the historical heritage of Reformed Presbyterianism. There are two American denominations with the name Reformed Presbyterian; the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod, of which Dr. Payne is a member, and with which the Orthodox Presbyterian Church is considering a possible merger; and the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America, the "Covenanter" church that still maintains such "distinctive principles" as the exclusive use of the Psalms in worship, "close" or restricted communion, and the principle of "political dissent" against any government that does not recognize Christ as King.]

One can only rejoice at Dr. Payne's enthusiastic espousal of the Reformed Presbyterian heritage. There are, however, some points of historical fact that call for clarification, for Dr. Payne has failed to recognize some important distinctions in the development of Reformed Presbyterianism.

(1) The Reformed Presbyterian Church, N. A., or "old side," is the heir of the Scottish Covenanters both in terms of lineage and, more importantly, in adherence to their doctrinal position. I refer particularly to "political dissent" or the doctrine of Christ's headship over men and nations as understood and applied in the Covenanting tradition. This is of vital significance in deciding which branch — RPCNA/"old side" or RPCES/"new side" — is the doctrinal and therefore proper descendant of the pre-1833 R. P. Church.

The "new side" group departed from the pre-1833 position on "political dissent" — on that there is no debate — and therefore forfeited what was uniquely Reformed Presbyterian. That the "new side" group in 1833 retained the minutes and continued to number her Synods from the first one in 1809 is a testimony, not to continuity of doctrinal commitment, but to the desire to retain the respectability of the

The Presbyterian Guardian

EDITOR
JOHN J. MITCHELL

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R. P. name and the link with the past. The "old side" group, *sans* minutes, clerk, etc., did continue to uphold the (pre-1833) Reformed Presbyterian position.

(2) The subsequent history of the R. P. C., General Synod, or "new side," reveals a progressive departure from Covenanting principles. "Political dissent" is gone, and "exclusive psalmody," "public covenanting," and "close communion" all disappear in time. Having lost her "distinctive" moorings, so to speak, the "new side" church drifted toward the haven of fundamentalistic Presbyterianism — hence the union with the Evangelical Presbyterian Church in 1965 to form the present RPCES.

(3) The R. P. churches in Scotland and Northern Ireland have the closest communion with the RPCNA, or "old side" group. Why? Because they too are "old side" in doctrine as much as the American sister-church! Together these three R. P. churches (a fourth will soon be organized in Australia) arranged International Covenanter Conventions in 1896, 1938, and 1966. (One scheduled for the summer of 1972 was cancelled due to the strife in N. Ireland.)

These conventions were, and will be, devoted to the fostering of distinctive Reformed Presbyterian principles. Will the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod rally round the banner of "Christ's Kingship over the nations" and "exclusive psalmody"? We sincerely hope so.

Thank you, Dr. Payne, for drawing our attention again to our Reformed Presbyterian heritage. May the investigation of it prove to be a means of revitalizing our present witness, perhaps leading to a biblical union of all those who seek to rediscover and uphold the scriptural principles of the "Covenanted Word of Reformation."

Gordon J. Keddie
(Licentiate, RPCNA, "Covenanter")
Pittsburgh, Pa.

The Presbyterian Guardian

The Wisdom of Babes

BARBARA van de SANDE

Our first-grader came home from school with a complaint. He doesn't usually complain about school. But the other day he appeared to be quite unhappy as he said to me, "Proud, proud, proud! That's all I hear. My teacher has been teaching pride to us all year. We should be proud of our country. Everything we do in school should be done to make our parents proud of us. I get sick and tired of all this proud stuff."

I'll have to admit I was a bit surprised. I didn't expect to hear that kind of discernment coming from our first-grader, and at that time I didn't have an answer for him. But neither have I disregarded him. Perhaps he did have a legitimate complaint. Maybe he could see that what he has learned in school doesn't jibe with what he has learned from God's Word. Isn't that the way it often goes when we send our children to public schools?

Should my son's complaint be brushed aside? Is there no wisdom at all to be found in the mouths of babes? After mulling this over in my mind for several days, and searching the Scriptures, I have come to the conclusion that he was merely putting into practice what we have been trying to drum into his head ever since he was old enough to understand — *that all pride is sin.*

But does that include pride of country and pride of families? I would unhesitatingly answer "Yes" to this question. Wasn't that the kind of pride God continually condemned in the Israelites? "Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before stumbling. It is better to be of

a humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide spoil with the proud" (Proverbs 16:18).

Or, consider this: "Everyone who is proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord; assuredly he will not be unpunished" (Proverbs 16:5). And to sum it all up: "Do not love the world, nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world" (1 John 2:15).

Certainly I can and should be thankful that I was not born into a family of convicted thieves and murderers ("convicted," because aren't we all murderers and thieves in our hearts?). I can rejoice that I am an American and can worship God as I please, and that my body is not wasting away from starvation. But nowhere in the Scriptures can I find support for the idea that I should be *proud* of my country or family. I believe the Bible makes it clear that God scorns pride on a personal level. God does not condone family pride, and someday our Lord will certainly bring our national pride to nought. This is what I will tell my son.

"According as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 1:31).

Mrs. van de Sande is a member of the Good Shepherd Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Neptune, New Jersey. Her answer to her son first appeared in the newsletter of this congregation.

Book Briefs

Creation or Evolution, DAVID D. REIGLE. ZONDERVAN, GRAND RAPIDS. 94 pp., \$.95.

Science, God and You, ENNO WOLTHUIS. BAKER, GRAND RAPIDS. 121 pp., \$1.50. REVIEWED BY ROLLIN P. KELLER, PASTOR OF EMMANUEL ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF WILMINGTON, DELAWARE.

Here are two small volumes to add to the quantity of books on the general subject of Christianity and science. They are valuable for the following reasons.

Mr. Riegle's book describes itself on the cover: "The fallacies of the evolutionary theory explained for junior high students." To my knowledge there is no other publication available to the student of this age that he can really understand. And yet it is just at this age that our public school children are most viciously assaulted with the theory. From here on, evolution is an assumption rather than an overt subject of study.

This book seeks to set forth many of

the real questions of origins, contrasting the answers of evolutionaries with those of creationists. The summary sections in the back are especially helpful. Mr. Riegle also makes mention of the great hoax of the "Piltdown Man" — which is rather embarrassing to those whose faith is caught up in "scientism."

The second book is even more valuable, though not quite as readable for the junior high student. Everyone in high school and older ought to read this book. This is easily the sanest, most reasonable, and at the same time most incisive book on the subject that I remember reading. It is not a technical book, nor does Dr. Wolthuis

talk down to the reader.

He carefully shows how the scientific method developed, what its benefits are, and what are its limitations. Wolthuis is not putting down scientific methodology; he is very much for it. As a chemistry professor he deals with the scientific method every day. His only contention is to use this valuable tool correctly. Who could possibly disagree with such a reasonable plea?

The author carefully and eloquently explains what a presupposition is and how it affects scientific studies. He shows with irrefutable logic how every scientist is swayed by faith, whether it is Christian or anti-Christian. The "open mind" is really a fiction, but to recognize that fact is to make great progress.

Christians should become scientists, and Wolthuis shows why this is true. But no Christian can be a good scientist, or conversely, no scientist can be a good Christian, without knowing the principles set forth in this book.

Summing up the AACS "dialog"

A double book review

In the March 1971 *Guardian*, the editor reviewed two books about the church of today. Both were written by authors who profess the Reformed faith and accept Scripture's authority. But the two books had quite different views of the church's nature and suitable remedies for its shortcomings.

Out of Concern for the Church is a collection of essays by adherents of the Association for the Advancement of Christian Scholarship, some of whom are faculty members of the AACS-supported Institute for Christian Studies in Toronto. The other book, *The Church at the End of the Twentieth Century*, is by Dr. Francis A. Schaeffer of L'Abri in Switzerland.

In our judgment, Dr. Schaeffer's view of the church is by far the more biblical, and his remedy — Christians must practice love for the truth and for the brethren even at great cost to themselves — is what God's people should do. The AACS was quite critical of the "institutional church" — often justifiably so — but stressed other institutionalized forms of Christian activity in various spheres of life outside the "institutional church."

Not much came of that review — an outcome editors get used to. But a year later, in the April 1972 *Guardian*, Professor John M. Frame wrote about "The Quiet Crisis" in the National Union of Christian Schools. The NUCS, a federation of Christian schools holding to the Reformed faith, was considering changes in its constitution. The proposed changes were, in Frame's judgment, strongly influenced by views emanating from the AACS and were dangerously defective. (The NUCS, at least partly because of Professor Frame's alarms, did reject these particular alterations.)

A published "dialog"

That article, however, did draw a response. In the months that followed, the *Guardian* printed articles by AACS adherents and by Frame. Why all these words? Many readers found the "dialog" hard to follow. But we felt there were issues of basic importance. The AACS has developed out a Reformed background and appeals to Reformed Christians in North America. Its writings and conferences have reached many *Guardian* readers, some of whom support the AACS and some of whom oppose it.

The "dialog," though it began with AACS views on Christian schools, mainly focused on the AACS idea of the "Word of God," which they feel has not been properly understood until now. The difference in viewpoint is substantial, though there is also much misunderstanding. By airing both "sides," the *Guardian* feels it has given readers evidence enough for making their own judgment. That was our concern in printing all those words.

Conference at Westminster

Growing out of the printed debate was an invitation from the Westminster Seminary Student Association for a special conference between members of the Institute in Toronto and the Seminary in Philadelphia. The conference was held on April 19-21 at Westminster. Participants were Dr. James H. Olthuis and Dr. Bernard Zylstra from Toronto, with Professor Frame, Dr. Edmund P. Clowney,

Professor Norman Shepherd, and Dr. Robert D. Knudsen of the Seminary.

Speakers presented papers on assigned topics concerning the source of the church's orders and the relation between the "cultural mandate" and the missions mandate. Responses to each paper were made and general discussion was permitted. In general, the conference did remove some of the misconceptions on both sides and generated a better climate for further discussion.

Why all the concern?

The *Guardian's* editor has been bombarded from all sides. Why don't you just say the AACS teaches heresy? Or, can't you say something good about this Christian organization?

To answer the last one, let it be said that much of what comes of this "Toronto movement" is good, scriptural, and needed. AACS spokesmen are greatly concerned that Christians live out their commitment to the Lord in everything they do, that we be visible Christians every day and not just for an hour on Sunday. The AACS wants to see Christians engaged in developing Christian principles and approaches in education, art, science, economics, politics, or any other area of human activity. These are things that God's people should be doing.

So, why don't we all join the AACS in this endeavor? The problem is with certain ideas that appear frequently in their writings, ideas that are defective, perhaps dangerous, and are departures from Scripture. There are three major areas where this concern arises. What follows is an attempt to indicate these in simple terms and to suggest briefly why they are a problem.

"The Word of God"

Most important, since it is most basic, is the AACS understanding of "the Word of God." Professor Frame discussed this in his earlier articles, and a sequel is included in this issue of the *Guardian*. In brief, the AACS emphasizes the fact that God's Word is not solely what is found in Scripture, but includes Christ the incarnate Word, and the words of God that called creation into being and now maintain it.

The AACS believes that the "creation word" has been mistakenly neglected by Christians. It is difficult to know precisely how the AACS thinks we are to locate this "word" or how we are to "read" it. It does seem fair to say that they would stress a degree of authority for this "form" of God's Word that is similar to that of Scripture.

To be sure, as Paul says in Romans 1, creation clearly reveals the glory, wisdom, and Godhood of God, leaving men with no excuse. But whether creation now reveals the actual "words" of God is quite another question. More crucial yet is the question of the authority to be given to creation's testimony. In what sense are "creation words" available to us at all, and in what sense are they "normative" for our lives? Are these "creation words" to be obeyed like the words of Scripture?

These questions are not clearly answered by the AACS. Nor does the AACS address itself to the question of infallibility in connection with the revelation in creation. Certainly creation has certain "norms" or "laws" that are discoverable. The "law" of gravity is undoubtedly a reflection of an

The Session Book

Church visitation

The following letter was sent to members of a congregation to explain why the session members visited the homes and what they hoped to accomplish.

As members of your session, we are aware of the sober responsibility God has given us. Nowhere is this more clearly set forth than in Hebrews 13:17 which declares that it is the duty of the elders to "watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief." It is our earnest desire to carry out our responsibilities in ever increasing faithfulness to our Lord.

One of the most important means of implementing our task as undershepherds is home visitation. It is our goal to visit each family in the congregation once a year. This letter has been written to indicate more specifically the purpose of sessional visitation.

First, it is generally desirable that all members of the family be present, if possible, including those who may not be members of our church. We are concerned about the spiritual growth of each one, including the little ones. And we are particularly desirous of counselling with those who have never openly professed faith in Christ. Spiritual growth is the normal condition of the Christian's

life, and accordingly we are interested in knowing both the ways in which the Lord has been blessing you and also problems that are hindering your relationship to God, in order that we may pray with and for you. We also want each one to feel free to offer criticism and to inform us of areas in our church life where improvements can be made.

That is a general summary of the purpose of visitation. More specifically, we are concerned about such matters as: personal Bible reading and prayer, family devotions, training of children in the home, use of the Lord's day including faithfulness in attendance at services, stewardship of time and means, and your witness to neighbors and friends. We want to help in any way possible with respect to any problem of doctrine or life that may have arisen concerning which you desire spiritual counsel. In short, as we recognize our own frailty and need of your prayers, we want to stand with you in genuine fellowship and communion of the Holy Spirit.

As representatives of the session visiting in your home, we trust that you will pray for us, that our accounting to God for you may be done not with grief but with much joy.

In the bonds of Christ's fellowship,
Your session

original creative utterance by God. We even speak of "obeying" this "law."

Scripture also reveals God's laws to us. We are to love God and our neighbor. But this "law of love" is not at all the same sort of "law" as that of gravity. Gravity is an element of creation's structure, to be "obeyed" by all physical bodies willy-nilly. You do not have to believe in gravity or consciously "obey" it; it is rather a principle of the organization God has given to his creation.

The "law of love" on the other hand is directed to our hearts, minds, souls, bodies, our total strength and humanness. It is to be obeyed or not as the will of each individual determines. It involves us in faith, willing submission, and obedience — or in disbelief, defiance, and rejection. The "creation words" are not matters calling for faith and obedience, but point beyond themselves to the Creator God. The laws of Scripture, summed up in the "great commandments," address the very heart of man directly and call him into personal relationship to the Savior God.

It is a basic principle of Scripture, and of the Reformation, that "the *only* rule to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy" our God is "the word of God, which is contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments" (Westminster Shorter Catechism, answer to Question 2; emphasis added). There is no other authoritative word of God available to us, no other infallible rule of faith and practice for us.

Creation is not to be ignored. But neither does creation reveal to us the "norms" God has willed for us to live by. Creation is to be used to God's glory — and that involves us in the study of God's handiwork. But the "norms" for our lives, our use of creation itself, are provided in the Scripture. It is Scripture that completely furnishes us for every good work.

Sin and God's curse

Much is said in AACS writings of Christ's having renewed all things. But entirely too little attention is given to the continuing power of Satan, the continuing presence of sin even in the regenerate, and the abiding curse of God upon this present world. Creation is not what it was for Adam, but is groaning in misery as it waits for the completed redemption of the sons of God (Romans 8:18-25).

This truth bears on the idea of the "creation word." Conceivably Adam might have been able to know God's will through careful observation of God's creation before sin entered. As a matter of fact, God gave the man verbal revelation even before the fall into sin. And after the fall, man's reason was polluted by sin along with his other abilities, and creation itself was subjected to the curse of God. The AACS writers never seem to ask themselves whether it is possible to distinguish the effects of God's curse and man's sin on the creation and so get back to the original "creation words."

The problem here is mainly one of failing to take full account of the devastating effects of God's curse on the whole creation. It is also a failure to reckon with the polluting effects of sin in every human activity. Only Scripture itself provides a prescription for the believer to follow in determining how to live his servant life in the various aspects of human existence. The exceeding sinfulness of sin, the terrible weight of God's wrath and curse, and the pervasive and malicious power of Satan, all need far more attention than is given them in the writings of the AACS.

The nature of the church

Despite sharp criticism of the "institutional church," the AACS program calls for similar institutions in other areas of

life. The "institutional church" is to tend to its own affairs in worship, confession, and discipline. Other institutions, like the Christian school, are to have their own structure and internal government apart from the "institutional church." Instead of one institution, justifiably subject to some criticism, the AACCS would have many.

Christ did not mean for the church to be thus divided into a multiplicity of institutions. Our Lord did mean for his church to be a living organism, and for its members to be active in all areas of life. But part of his building of the church was to provide it with a structure — with ordinances and offices, with rule and ministry. The organization of the church is both skeleton and central nervous system for the whole living body of believers. It is not a distinct entity apart from the whole body, but is an integral aspect of the body.

What the church needs is not more institutions, though some of these may serve good ends. What the church, as

Christ's body on earth, really needs to be what Christ intended is a rich infusion of the Spirit of Christ — the presence of the life-giving Spirit himself. The church as an organization needs to be concerned to provide the bread of life that the members might be truly "lively stones" in God's temple. With that life of the Spirit, the whole body will be enlivened in love for Christ, for his truth, for the brethren. Then people will say of us, "Behold, how they love one another!"

With this we conclude our presentation of material in the "dialog" with the AACCS. We hope the result will be that readers exercise caution in regard to the views of the AACCS even as they consider the AACCS's call to total Christian living in every area of life. We hope also that these comments will be considered by the AACCS, that the Scriptures will be searched, and that God's truth will be clearer to us all as a result.
— J. J. M.

What is God's Word?

JOHN M. FRAME

This is a very condensed summary of a paper presented by Professor Frame of Westminster Theological Seminary at a conference in April 1973 sponsored by the Westminster Student Association. It was greeted as a helpful approach in the "dialog" between Professor Frame and others at Westminster and representatives of the Association for the Advancement of Christian Scholarship.

The summary has been made by the *Guardian's* editor and he should be held responsible for any unfortunate expressions in it.

The ten propositions set forth here are intended to contribute to the on-going dialog with the men from Toronto, and are presented as a kind of outline of a Christian philosophy of revelation.

1. The Word of God is divine.

The basic ontological [i.e., referring to whatever basically exists] distinction in Scripture is between Creator and creature; everything that is has been created except for God himself. There are no in-betweens, no half divine or semi-created beings.

This is not to say that there may not be cases where you have both. Certainly you have both in the incarnate Christ who is fully God and fully man. But it is to say that there are no missing links, no *tertium quid*, no chain of being between God and his creation.

Is the Word of God a creature, Creator, or both? Well, if by the Word of God the heavens were made (Psalm 33:6), then the Word is not itself created but is Creator. It is co-eternal with God (John 1:1ff.); the Word of God was God; the Word of God is divine.

So then, to obey the Word is to obey God; to disobey it is to disobey God. But the Word in *Scripture is God come in human form*; it is an incarnation. The Bible is *both* Creator and creature.

2. The Word reflects God's plurality.

The Word is not only identified with God, it is distinguished from God (John 1:2). It is *by* the Word that the heavens were made, so that the Word is a tool. There is a unity *and* a distinction which we cannot account for.

There is a mystery here like that of the Trinity, the one God in three persons.

It should not surprise us to learn that there is also a unity and a plurality in God's speaking even as there is in God himself. God speaks *one* Word; God also speaks *many* words. The Word reflects the unity of God's speaking. All of nature and history is governed by a single unified plan of God. But within this unity there is a richness of detail, a vast diversity. There is one Word and many words.

3. The Word addresses man in its unity and plurality.

When God speaks to man, we hear one Word and we hear many words. God's Word has a single unified theme — call it the theme of creation-fall-redemption, if you will. But Scripture presents that theme in a multitude of stories, songs, prophecies, letters, etc. God's Word imposes on us the single command of love; but that command is presented in a variety of commands on many issues covering the whole of human life.

Both the unity and diversity of God's Word are binding upon us; they are equally powerful, equally true, equally authoritative. The one central message of God's Word grips man's heart; the many details of God's Word also grip the heart of man.

4. The Word addresses man in his unity and plurality.

Man in God's image is also a one and many even as God is one and many. The Word of God grips man's heart; but it also grips all of his faculties. The one central message grips all man's faculties, gifts, concerns, cares, worries, and fears; but the details of the Word also grasp all my fears, needs, heartaches, questions, and concerns.

Both the central message and the details of God's Word address both the heart of man and all of man's functions and concerns. The Word of God is comprehensive and specific, to the heart of man and all his faculties, to the whole person in all areas of his life.

5. The Word is accessible to all human faculties.

God's Word, in its central meaning and in its detail, is

addressed to all of our faculties. God expects that Word to be appropriated, accepted, and obeyed by the heart and by the faculties. We cannot begin to comprehend the Word of God exhaustively; but the Word is to be understood, accepted, and obeyed. We are obligated to mobilize all our gifts in appropriating the Word, to use our senses, feelings, rationality, our historical sense, lingual capacity, economic skills, our esthetic sensitivity, moral sense, our unity, and whatever else there may be. To withhold any faculty is unbelief.

What God wants us to know, the norms God commands us to obey, are clear and accessible. They can be understood and appreciated and obeyed. To say that the Word is beyond our faculties may sound humble; but it is actually a form of disobedience and arrogance. God spoke clearly in human language, accommodating his revelation to us. We can, therefore, speak the Word, study and analyze it, apply and obey it. To limit the Word's freedom to speak to us is to limit the authority of the Word over us.

6. God's Word comes as both power and meaning.

The gospel is the power of God unto salvation. But it is not a bare power or raw force. The power of the Word reflects God's wisdom, knowledge, and understanding. It *communicates* these to us. God's Word is a word, is language, having not only power but meaning. The power of the Word saves us when the meaning is believed and obeyed.

Now the power of the Word is not something more basic than its meaning. God's Word is powerful because its meaning is truth. God's Word is true and means what it says because it has the power to do what it sets out to do. Because God's Word is not a blind force upon our heart, it can and does engage all of our faculties as we approach the meaning of God's Word.

7. Scripture embodies the unity of God's Word.

The Scriptures are a kind of incarnation of the Word of God. Scripture is God's Word, but it is also the words of men. It has a human and a divine nature. It has all the truth, power, holiness, and majesty of God; yet it conveys also the personalities of the human writers, speaking their language, their experience, faith, hopes, questions, and concerns.

Nevertheless, in this incarnate form the Word of God loses none of its truth and perfection. It is God's Word with supreme authority for us. It cannot be tested by anything else; it is not subordinate to some other Word of God. The words of the Bible do not merely witness to some other law, nor are they applicable to one cultural setting in contrast to some other more valid Word for other times and places. No, Scripture is law, and has the authority of the one Word of God. It brings God's demand and God's promise to bear on man's heart and upon all areas of man's life.

8. Scripture embodies the diversities of God's Word.

Scripture carries to us the full force of the one Word of God. At the same time, it is one Word of God among many. It does not contain everything God said. Instead, Scripture conveys a special message. It is necessary for a particular purpose that is not fulfilled by God's revelation in nature. It brings to us a message not found elsewhere, the message of redemption in Christ.

Thus, Scripture is not revelation in general, but is specifically the gospel, the power of God unto salvation. The Gentiles were not left to natural revelation alone. But God has spoken a particular Word that they must have, the

Word that names the name of Christ by which alone men can be saved.

9. Scripture is sufficient for all good works.

As the one Word of God, Scripture conveys the *whole will of God* to us. It needs no supplementation (2 Timothy 2:15-18). Scripture is profitable for the man of God that he may be thoroughly furnished unto *every* good work.

But obviously the Bible does not contain everything we need to know. How can we say it is sufficient for all good works? Put it this way: Scripture does not contain all the *knowledge* we need, but all the *commandments*. Scripture does not tell us how many kinds of trees there are, but it tells us to use the trees to God's glory.

When I obey the speed laws I obey Scripture. Scripture requires me to obey that speed limit. I do not discover that this is God's Word from some other source. When I apply Scripture to my present situation — and obey the speed law — I have truly appropriated the teaching of Scripture.

Since Scripture conveys God's whole will for us, it covers all areas of our lives (1 Corinthians 10:31). Scripture certainly does have a focus — the message of salvation. But that focus does not limit Scripture's message to some single area of man's life. The message of salvation is of salvation for *all of life*, for history, philosophy, esthetics, psychology. Scripture corrects our ideas in all of these areas, both the naive and theoretical. It is the height of presumption to claim that Scripture cannot speak on *any* matter of human life or concern.

10. Scripture has a distinctive function in revelation.

As one Word of God among many, Scripture has its distinctive function in the process of God's revelation of himself to us. Not only should we make use of God's Word in Scripture, but we should also make use of God's Word in nature and history. The scientist will study God's world as well as the Scriptures. He will realize the world is controlled by God's plan and reflects God's wisdom and power.

Then when we come to the Scriptures, we bring many things from our study of the world. We bring all sorts of ideas we have learned elsewhere, from ordinary experience, from philosophy, theological systems, or history. We bring our world-and-life views to bear upon our study of Scripture.

Yet we must remember that God has given us Scripture because without it we are blind to God's revelation in the world. Scripture was given to save us from our sinful wisdom, to correct our sinful ideas. The words of Scripture must take unconditional precedence over any ideas we have gained from other sources. We must bring our philosophies, sciences, world-and-life views, all to the Scripture.

We must use all these in interpreting the Bible. But we must hold such things loosely. We must allow Scripture to resist our attempts to interpret it through those means. We must allow Scripture to question our world views, our scientific views, naive ideas, theoretical ideas, our philosophies.

This is not to say that Scripture is more authoritative than the words of God in creation, or than the living Word, Jesus Christ. It is simply to admit that one distinctive function of Scripture, as one Word of God among many, is to correct sinful misconceptions of God's general revelation. Scripture must be allowed to surprise us, to be what it is, to be the Word of God himself.

In other words, Scripture must be allowed to be God's Word in all of its meaning and power, its unity and plurality, its power and authority and justice and holiness and purity and wisdom and truth.

The Presbyterian Guardian

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Philadelphia, Pa. 19126

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Here and There in The Orthodox Presbyterian Church

Rockford, Ill., Janesville, Wisc. — The Rev. Eugene Grilli, formerly pastor of the Lisbon (N.Y.) Church, is serving as home missionary to the chapels in Rockford and Janesville.

Harriman, Tenn. — *The Rev. Luder G. Whitlock is not accepting a call to Naples, Fla., as reported earlier, but is continuing as pastor of West Hills Church here.*

Sheboygan, Wisc. — The Rev. John R. Hilbelink has accepted the call to undertake a new home missions work here. His new address: 1915 N. 7th Street, Sheboygan, WI 53081.

Thornton, Colo. — *The Rev. Elmer M. Dortzbach is serving Immanuel Church here as stated supply while he pursues graduate studies. His address: 9161 Vine St., Thornton, CO 80229.*

STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT AND CIRCULATION (Act of August 12, 1970; Section 3685; Title 39, United States Code):

1. Title of Publication: The Presbyterian Guardian
2. Date of filing: September 12, 1973
3. Frequency of issue: Ten times per year
4. Location of known office of publication: 7401 Old York Rd., Philadelphia, PA 19126
5. Location of headquarters: Same
6. and 7. Publisher and Owner: The Presbyterian Guardian Publishing Corp.; John J. Mitchell, editor; Same address as above
8. Known bondholders, etc.: None
9. In accordance with provisions of 39 U.S.C. 3626, I Herewith request permission to mail the publication named in item 1 at the reduced postage rates presently authorized by this statute. /s/ John J. Mitchell, editor
10. The purpose, function, and nonprofit status of this organization and the exempt status for Federal income tax purposes have not changed during preceding 12 months.
11. Av. number copies each issue (x); actual number copies issue nearest filing date (y).
 - A. Total No. Copies Printed: (x) 3950; (y) 4100.
 - B. Paid Circ.: Counter sales—(x) 186; (y) 171; mail subscriptions—(x) 3538; (y) 3686.
 - C. Total Paid Circ.: (x) 3202; (y) 3282.
 - D. Free Distribution, samples, etc.: (x) 549; (y) 605.
 - E. Total Distribution: (x) 3750; (y) 3887.
 - F. Office use, left-over: (x) 200; (y) 213.
 - G. Total: (x) 3950; (y) 4100.

I certify that the statements made by me above are correct and complete. John J. Mitchell, editor.

Elmhurst, Ill. — The Rev. Carl J. Reitsma is teaching Bible at the Timothy Christian High School. His new address: ONO10 Stanley St., Winfield, IL 60190.

Green Bay, Wisc. — *Approval of various loan applications has cleared the way for construction to begin on a building for the Chapel here. Home missionary John Fikkert was licensed to preach the gospel by the Presbytery of the Midwest on September 17.*

Denver, Colo. — The Park Hill Church has called the Rev. James L. Bosgraf of Hanover Park, Ill., to be its pastor. Mr. Bosgraf expects to arrive in Denver later this month.

OTHER NEW ADDRESSES

Chaplain John W. Betzold
915 Valley View, Mill Valley, CA 94941

The Rev. Henry W. Coray
555 Hwy 17, Santa Cruz, CA 95060

The Rev. A. Boyce Spooner
1605 Mantes Dr., Cocoa, FL 32922

HYMNAL COMMITTEE REACTIVATED

Trinity Hymnal, published by the Committee on Christian Education of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, has received wide and warm acceptance since its initial publication in 1961. But a great many new hymns and songs of praise have appeared in recent years. How to adjust the hymnal has been a question.

Appointed by the Christian Education Committee and under the chairmanship of Mr. William E. Viss, a special committee is actively working toward publication of a supplement to *Trinity Hymnal*, rather than a revision at this time. Other committee members are the Rev. Kenneth Meilahn, Mrs. Jean Clowney, and Mr. Robert Ashlock.

New materials are being sought by the committee. Suggestions for inclusion of material, contemporary or original, are most welcome. Have you ever thought of writing your praise to God in metered poetry to a tune you like? Or perhaps you have a "new song" in your heart. Write it down! If you don't know how, find someone to help you and send it to us at MUSIC, 7401 Old York Road, Philadelphia, PA 19126.

It is time to sing new songs of praise to our God!
— Jean Clowney