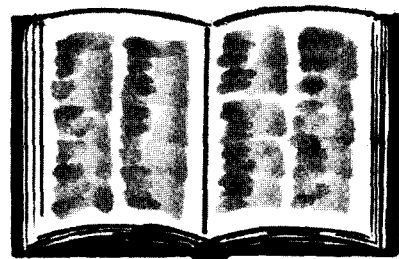


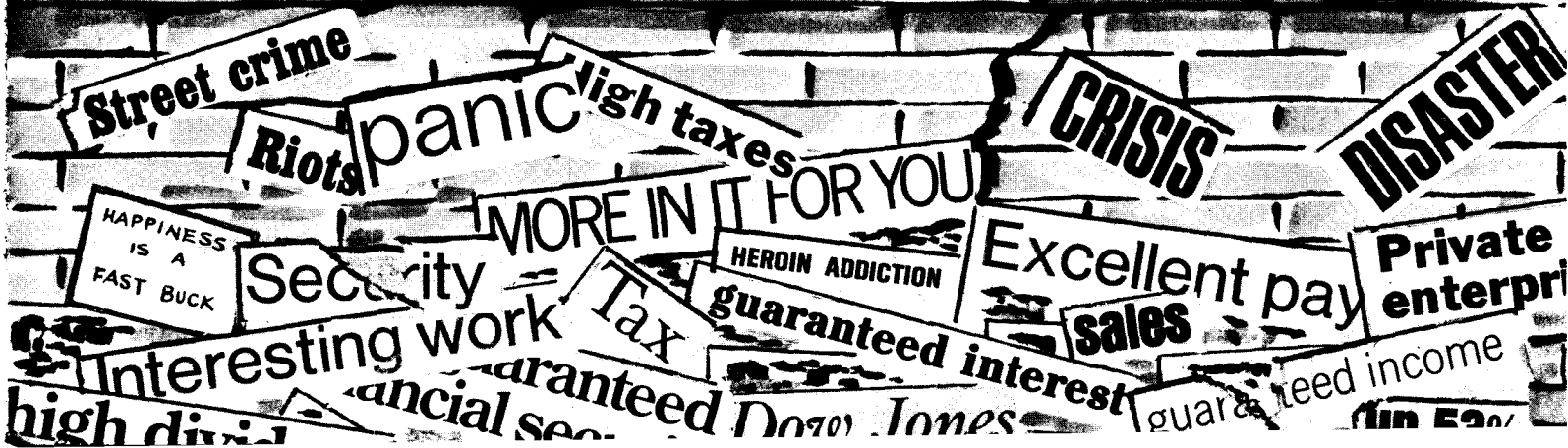
# The Presbyterian Guardian

VOL. 41, NO. 8—OCTOBER, 1972

Confronting  
*the American businessman*  
with the gospel



INFLATION



# Confronting the American businessman with the gospel

C. JOHN MILLER

Many young people have been turning to Christ in recent years. This is especially true of today's long-haired alienated youth. But it would be a serious mistake for Christians to neglect the parents of this generation, to write off the fathers and mothers as hopeless prospects.

Often the fathers seem self-sufficient and therefore unapproachable, though their children are most evidently hurt and wounded morally and spiritually. The very hurts of the younger generation call forth our sympathy. And it is very easy to be put off by the apparent competence of the men and women who make up the business and professional community. These "backbone" members of the American scene are sure of themselves; they seem more prepared to lead than to listen. Frequently they are quite self-righteously hostile to the gospel. By contrast, their long-haired offspring seem more immediately responsive to the authority of God's Word.

But I believe this is partly a misreading of the situation. On the first contact the young people in rebellion are often as hostile to the claims of Christ as are their parents. However, since their needs are so much more readily visible, Christian workers have tended to pursue them with sympathetic concern until their hearts are won over.

In a word, you can reach these young people by learning to look through their outward appearance—the unkempt hair and sloppy dress—to the needy persons they really are. Well, let us apply the same principle to the sinners of the great middle class. Let us look at them feelingly; let us carry the gospel to them with the same loving zeal.

## The root of a crisis . . .

Students of the American businessman have multiplied in the twentieth century. Novelists like Theodore Dreiser and Sinclair Lewis have focused upon the interpenetration of the materialistic outlook by a romantic idealism. *How to Win Friends and Influence People* (in 1936) proved that the businessman's practical thought patterns had been discerningly analyzed by Dale Carnegie.

Since World War II, more systematic sociological studies of the business and professional world have been popularized by authors like Vance Packard. His book, *The Organization Man*, shows how a new kind of deperson-

alized life is becoming normal for many executives in today's large corporations. This nihilistic mode of living, with special emphasis on its destructive effect upon the American home, has been powerfully dramatized on the stage by Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* and Edward Albee's *The American Dream*.

But the most discerning critic of the American businessman and the whole middle class was and is Alexis de Tocqueville. His two-volume *Democracy in America* (1830) put the finger directly on the pulse beat of life in these United States. What this gifted foreigner saw with great clarity is that the American is essentially a religious person, a man of faith. In 1829 de Tocqueville could not foresee precisely how this religious faith would be transformed in the next century and a half; but he did see that the motivational springs of American enterprise came from a religious commitment that was essentially Christian in origin.

## . . . a belief in progress and development

*More specifically, what de Tocqueville detected in American life is that businessmen are men of confidence, and that this confidence is rooted in the Christian religion.* Or, let me put it another way: From his New England Puritan and Presbyterian heritage, the American had learned to think in terms of progress and development.

The early colonists and subsequent generations tended to believe that they had come to America through a special providence. The Son of God had come in the flesh to seal the covenant of grace with his blood and to redeem a people for himself. And it was hoped that in this new land of promise Christ's kingdom would take visible form.

Here in America the godly society would appear through the Spirit's mighty reviving of the people of God. From this godly society would flow worldwide benefits—evangelism of the nations, and peace throughout the earth. Perhaps in America the godly society would also become the good society with widespread prosperity and material abundance. (For a summary of this post-millennial view by a committed exponent, see Jonathan Edwards' *History of Redemption*; 1793.)

As he faced his work and his world, the Christian man worked hard, motivated by faith in the God of the cov-

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enant. Because God's blessing rested on his labor, and because history was guided by the divine hand toward the kingdom's fulfillment, the believer had every reason to live confidently in the face of rampant disease, a vast wilderness, and hostile Indians.

The Christian home stood very close to the center of this religious vision, or at least was seen as a primary vehicle for its realization. Within its sacred walls loving discipline and Bible reading would extend the covenant of grace from generation to generation. Even the common school did not originate as an institution in its own right; rather, its role was to serve the needs of the home by giving enough education to each child to ensure his ability to read the Bible for himself. Thus when the child was ready to establish his own home he would be prepared to guide his children by the principles written in Scripture. So fundamental was the home to life in early New England that the Massachusetts Bay Colony passed a law requiring unattached single persons to live within a family unit.

### . . . a faith in self

Through the years this Christian view of things has been radically transformed in the direction of secularism. Today, most Americans have transferred their confidence to themselves and to technology and science. God-confidence has been replaced by self-trust; dependence upon man and his machines has supplanted dependence on God and his providence.

This transformation accounts for the crisis in today's middle class world. The basis for faith has disappeared, but the habit remains. At this moment in history, optimistic self-reliance in the Ben Franklin tradition has failed to deliver the goods. Specifically, the American home has virtually collapsed or is in the process of doing so. Whatever influence men like Alan Watts and Timothy Leary may have exerted in forming the drug culture, its most fundamental point of origin is the American home that is no home. The drug culture grew out of the materialism, the relativism, and the sensualism that were thriving within the world of the typical American family.

In summary, you need to see these points:

- The Christian faith in coming to America brought with it an emphasis on confidence in the divine sovereignty. Gradually, however, this trust in the God of the covenant was transmuted into self-confidence.
- The Christian home had a central role within this religious vision of life. The home was the fundamental social and religious unit. But today the home is little more than four walls and a roof housing its inmates.
- Today's middle class person is caught in a powerful tension. The home, once the source of life and sanity, is now the fountainhead of the drug culture, and many other great evils. In other words, self-reliance—the secularized version of the Christian faith—has itself broken down in a most crucial area. Hence today's business man is almost forced to listen to the gospel message in a new way.

### Vulnerable to the gospel

Here is the issue: *The person who wishes to witness effectively to the American businessman must look sympathetically at his dreadful predicament.* Stated bluntly, the faith-world of the businessman has collapsed.

Where he is hurting the most is in the area of the home. It's not simply that the divorce rate in the last few years

has shot up again with incredible speed; this is true, but is a symptom not an explanation. And it's not simply that drug-taking has become epidemic among middle class young people. It is rather that many millions of homes have only the name; in reality they are not homes at all. In these "homes" there is no legal divorce, but neither is there any real love or genuine marriage. Where outright hatred between man and wife does not manifest itself, dull indifference takes over. The household is kept together "for the sake of the children"—who rapidly fill in the vacuum with drugs and sexual promiscuity.

Until recently Christian homes were generally preserved from the full force of this moral and cultural collapse. In fact, there are still considerable numbers of Christians living in rural and suburban areas who are hardly sensitive to these changes. But these islands of peace are themselves being rapidly eroded away. As the United States veers in the direction of becoming one huge Sodom and Gomorrah, it is simply impossible for Christian homes to remain unaffected.

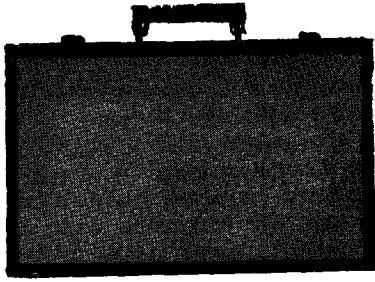
What this means is that *now is the time to present the gospel to the middle American and his children.* Even if your motive is so poor that you only wish to preserve your own home from destructive forces, you should go forth with the message of saving hope. But having the much higher motive of bringing glory to Christ through the saving of souls, you must see the present hour as one of great opportunity, perhaps an opportunity unparalleled in America for over a century.

Today's businessman is being compelled to listen whether he wants to or not. I am not suggesting that he is prepared to receive the gospel with open arms. But it is my contention that he is now being forced, by the blunt logic of divine judgment, to reassess some of his most cherished assumptions. This leaves him vulnerable to the gospel in quite a new way.

### Religious presumption/biblical faith

A non-Christian businessman recently said to a minister of the gospel, "Somebody up there likes me." In support of this conclusion, he pointed out that his business affairs had prospered through good and bad times, his health was good, and in a time of danger he had been saved from death by a slight change in his route of travel. The minister, who was a friend of his, kindly reinterpreted the man's experience for him; he noted that God's purpose in all this display of goodness was to lead the man to repentance, not to self-congratulation and pride (Romans 2:4).

What this man had experienced and thought is virtually a parable of American religious experience. Until about 1850, the center of religious faith was the sovereign God of the Bible and his incarnate Son, Jesus Christ. However, after that time the center of confidence has shifted to man himself. Faith was no longer that God had become man; now man was intrigued by the prospect that he could become God. The kingdom vision had, as it were, gone humanist and humanitarian, led by a bevy of New England transcendentalists and perfectionists whose optimism was rooted in presumption disguised as religious faith. Ralph Waldo Emerson, in his essay on "Self-Reliance," summed up the whole misguided business in one sentence: "Trust thyself, every heart vibrated to that iron string."



Whether the string was iron or not may be questioned. But certainly the tendency in the United States since then has been for "every heart" to vibrate to Emerson's dictum. The natural man is flattered by such lofty self-praise. The Unitarians and deists had already said much about man's perfectibility. In addition, the revolutionary teachings of Rousseau, Condorcet, and Condillac had been entering the country from France as far back as the 1790's. These teachings had stressed the power inherent in the human race to lift itself to a state of perfection. In the 1830's and '40s, John Humphrey Noyes, Albert Brisbane, and Horace Greeley joined the transcendentalists to spread a socialist version of the gospel of self-trust.

Space does not permit the enumeration of all the leaders and movements since 1850 that have joined in this growing praise of man. A mere glance at the record brings to mind the neo-Hegelian philosophers in St. Louis, the progressive movement in education culminating in John Dewey's thought, and the emphasis on the social gospel by Walter Rauschenbusch, and others.

In the field of psychology, a Carl Rogers could base his whole approach on the inherent goodness somehow surviving in every man. In politics you have Franklin Roosevelt telling the nation there was "nothing to fear but fear itself." Hollywood films for a generation picked up this message and sent it out to the whole world. In *The Sound of Music* Julie Andrews could sing of "confidence in confidence." "The Bible" of this self-confidence movement became the *Reader's Digest*, and Norman Vincent Peale was its most popular theologian. Because man is inherently good, or at least morally neutral, depressed Americans were challenged to think positively.

Well, the point of all this is that it has all blown up in our faces! This cloud had no silver lining; it had a thunderbolt of divine wrath. We presumed that God was just like us, but he wasn't. Protected by vast oceans, the United States has not been invaded by a foreign army since the War of 1812. Except for the flu epidemic at the end of World War I, America has hardly known a serious plague. Material prosperity, beyond the wildest dreams of past generations, has given us two cars for most families and enough electrical gadgets to threaten a power failure.

Like the businessman who assumed that "somebody up there likes me," Americans have presumed that these blessings were a basis for self-congratulation rather than tokens of the Lord's kindness and patience designed to lead us to contrite repentance.

#### Confronting the "confidence man"

Almost as soon as the "confidence man" appeared in American life, with his faith in himself and his fellows,

a number of perceptive observers have been so shocked that they have leaped to their feet and shouted "Fake!" Included in this distinguished group are James Fennimore Cooper, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Herman Melville, and Charles Hodge of Princeton Theological Seminary.

But the efforts of these men to confront the "confidence man" have been less than successful. Melville's critique in *The Confidence Man* was brilliant but ineffective because it was founded on a cynical nihilism. Cooper had lost much of his audience by the time he went after Aristobulus Bragg and Stedfast Dodge. Hawthorne had little to offer in the way of a positive faith for Americans. Even the distinguished Hodge, though motivated by a biblical faith, was not sufficiently aggressive nor theologically consistent with his own principles in applying God's Word to these optimistic illusions.

Cornelius Van Til of Westminster Seminary, however, has laid the basis for a far better critique of this line of thought. Following Calvin, Van Til has emphasized that sin represents an attack on the divine majesty. This attack takes particular form in man's proclaiming himself equal to (or superior to) the Creator.

Now this is exactly what has gone wrong in the churches and society of the New World. Man began to proclaim his own moral and rational autonomy. Having borrowed resources from the Father's riches, modern man assumes that the key to his success lies in his own hard work and thrift. Progress seems the inevitable order of the day, with America in particular the heir to a manifest destiny. And once you have delivered the world from some of its worst ills—hostile Indians, slavery, alcoholism, ignorance—it would become clear to all that this universe is a rather friendly place with the scales weighted heavily on the side of righteousness. Technology, broadly understood, would supply material abundance for all and thus provide a solid base for the American dream of liberty without pain.

#### Letting the Scripture speak

But this attempt to play God has been dealt a crushing blow by events in the twentieth century. The borrowed resources are exhausted. Now is the opportunity for the Christian witness to go with tears to the businessman whose son is on drugs and to manifest the love of Christ for prodigal fathers and prodigal sons. Go, my friends; plead with them as ambassadors of Christ to turn from idolatrous self-trust to the living God whose ways are not our ways and whose thoughts are not our thoughts. Call him back from the shame of self-worship. Show him that faith-in-faith, confidence-in-confidence, is nothing less than an arrogant faith in yourself. Do this not in your own name but in the name of the God of Scripture. Let the Scripture speak!

What Scripture says about religious presumption is both clear and humbling. In the days of Samuel, the Israelites assumed that God was with his people. Immanuel was his name, and the ark of the covenant was his throne. When the Philistines defeated them in battle, the people sent for the ark, confident that the day of battle would be a day of victory (1 Samuel 4:3). But what ensued was a devastating slaughter of thirty thousand Israelites, the death of the priests Hophni and Phinehas, and the loss of the ark itself to the enemy (1 Samuel 4:11, 12).

There is no need, certainly, to identify United States history with that of ancient Israel. But the principle of

God's dealing is similar. God is the Creator, not the creature; he will not permit man to reverse the order. Americans have widely assumed that they were free to create their own cities without any regard for the First Commandment. They have read the world through the spectacles of optimistic human reason, the new authority. And the world they thought they saw has become increasingly a mythic, dream world, divorced from God's reality.

In *The Wizard of Oz*, for example, L. Frank Baum created a dream world which he was convinced represented the new American reality. He "purged" his fairy tale of the European corruptions of the nasty witches and monstrous giants. Instead he portrayed a land where evil is only on the surface, and goodness underlies all evil appearance. Dorothy is never really in danger. As Howard Mumford Jones observes in *The Pursuit of Happiness*, the lion only appears to be a coward, the tin soldier is really all heart, and the scarecrow is finally a pretty clever fellow. And the dread Wizard proves, upon examination, to be only a wizened old man who wouldn't hurt the tender Dorothys of the world.

But the sovereign God refuses to bless man's myth. He refused to be present, to be Immanuel in such a land. The middle class man and his whole way of life come under God's judgment. God has hidden his face from us and "consumed us by means of our iniquities" (Isaiah 64:7). The dream was beautifully portrayed by Judy Garland singing "Over the Rainbow" in the film version of *The Wizard of Oz*. But Judy's private world was as synthetic as the land of Oz. While she made her films it was a world of pills to sleep by and pills to wake up by. Inevitably the pills caught up with her, and though her drugs were different she was left as dead as Janice Joplin or Jimi Hendrix. The rainbow of the bourgeois has been blotted out beneath the cloud of divine displeasure.

#### SPECIFIC APPROACHES TO BUSINESSMEN

1. For purposes of initial contact, approach the businessman through familiar channels—the P.T.A., the service clubs, social gatherings, mutual friends, and of course the church. If you are a minister it is not difficult usually to get invited to speak on problems like drugs if you will take the trouble to become informed on the topic.

2. Win his interest by showing a sympathetic concern for the problems he has personally in his business and private life. Share your life with him. Do not pretend to be perfect, but let him see you have had problems too and the gospel really works currently in your own life and family.

3. Present the gospel in terms of his own questions and hurts. Remember that he is often genuinely concerned about such problems as the Viet Nam war, racial conflicts, crime, moral breakdown, and drugs. However, it is absolutely essential that you show him that the root of our problems lies in specific sins such as pride and self-trust, and our turning away from the God of the Bible.

4. Present the gospel over against what he thinks is the gospel. This is crucial. Make the contrast clear and sharp, especially concentrating on the false picture of Christ presented by religious liberals and leaders like Norman Vincent Peale. Contrast faith-in-faith with faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Show him that salvation lies outside of himself.

5. In respect to prayer for salvation, the sinner calls upon the name of the self-existent God of Scripture. Prayer must not be misconstrued as psychological harmonization with the "spiritual universe," but is a real speaking to the God who is (Psalm 115; Romans 10:12, 13). It is also of first importance to convince the man who has heard the gospel of the value of seeking God alone, of learning to stand in the presence of God. Especially beware of the strong inclination of men to use the minister or witnessing Christian as a priest. Prayer alone can go a long way toward circumventing this.

6. Set your own biblical hope in opposition to faith-in-faith. The businessman is a person who responds to a confident spirit in others. Live by faith in his presence. But let your confidence be rooted in the Christian hope and be ready to explain its basis in the death, burial and resurrection of Christ.

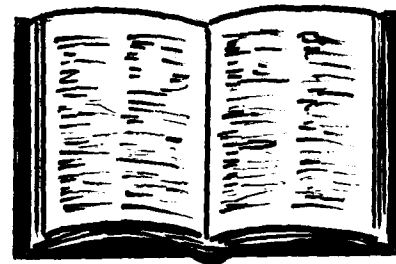
7. Speak of sin, saving faith, and repentance in relationship to the Creator-creature distinction. In the United States, man habitually places his faith in some aspect of the cosmos, especially in technology and science. This is American man's final exit. Henry Ford wrote a book entitled *My Philosophy of Work*; his thinking is revealed by one chapter entitled "Machinery as Messiah." The same idolatrous faith in "machinery" (i.e., mechanical manipulation of man and his environment) has characterized much of American life. Pollution has dimmed some of this faith, but American man still has immense confidence in the power of drugs to heal individuals and in educational technique to reorder society.

It is just this faith in the wonder drugs and the tranquilizers of the post-World War II period that laid the foundation for the drug crisis among young people in the 1960s and '70s. Without the faith of American adults in drugs, the young people would hardly have succumbed in such large numbers to the use of consciousness-altering drugs.

Point out, therefore, that God has judged man's worship of the creature—machinery or technique—by letting this idolatrous faith end in disaster. Show that repentance and faith involves, among other things, a humbling of the heart for having placed faith in the creation rather than in its Creator, and a turning to the Creator as man's only hope.

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*Dr. Miller is a professor of practical theology at Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia. The material above grows out of his own presentation of the gospel to businessmen and his continuing study to understand the American middle class in its presently frightening world.*



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## Reformed Ecumenical Synod — important, but disappointing

It was winter in Sydney, Australia, when the 1972 Reformed Ecumenical Synod convened on August 14. But instead of snow on the ground there were flowers in bloom. It did get chilly, though, and the ubiquitous electric space heaters were a great help.

The Rev. John P. Galbraith and Dr. George W. Knight III, representing the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, had arrived in Sydney a week earlier to participate in the four-day Missions Conference preceding the Synod. The sessions of the Missions Conference were enlivened at one point by some thirty demonstrators protesting the presence in Australia of the Rev. J. Vorster, brother of the prime minister of South Africa. He was a delegate from the largest of the Reformed denominations in South Africa but was identified in the minds of the demonstrators with that nation's *apartheid* policy. During the second week of Synod two separate bomb threats were made by telephone forcing delegates to leave the dining hall abruptly. A fire was also set outside the residence hall of Moore Theological College where the delegates were housed and where the sessions of Synod were held. Quick action on the part of Canon D. W. B. Robinson of the host school, prevented two cans of gasoline from exploding.

### The opening of Synod

On Monday evening, August 14, Synod was opened with a worship service at St. George's Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia in downtown Sydney. This denomination, closely related to the Free Church of Scotland, together with the Reformed Churches of Australia, composed largely of Dutch immigrants, were the host denominations for the Synod. Their warm hospitality was most impressive. Professor Klaas Runia of the Reformed Seminary in Kampen, the Netherlands, and Moderator of the previous Synod, preached the sermon.

At the first business session next day, Professor Runia was reelected Moderator; Mr. Galbraith, together with the Rev. P. E. S. Smith of South

Africa, were reelected officers of Synod. They were joined by the Rev. S. H. Widyapranawa of Indonesia and the Rev. S. P. E. Buti of the Bantu Church in South Africa. These men constitute the Interim Committee which carries on the business of Synod between meetings. The Synod reelected the Rev. Paul G. Schrottenboer of the Christian Reformed Church as General Secretary for another four-year term.

There were approximately 80 members of Synod with some 50 of these present as voting delegates. In addition to Messrs. Galbraith and Knight, the Orthodox Presbyterian Church was represented by Professors Richard B. Gaffin Jr. and Norman Shepherd. The Christian Reformed Church and the Reformed Presbyterian Church, N. A. (Covenanter) are the only other American churches in the Synod. There was at least one delegate present from each continent, but notably absent was any representative from Korea. (The Korean member churches have been very much concerned over the membership of certain RES churches in the World Council of Churches.)

### The operation of Synod

The RES functions more after the pattern of a Dutch synod rather than as a Presbyterian assembly. The moderator exercises considerable authority in directing debate and even enters into it without vacating the chair. The officers of Synod assign all delegates to advisory committees that meet for most of the first week to discuss study reports and communications assigned to them. These committees report periodically to the plenary sessions with recommendations for action. The 1972 RES met for two weeks and closed on Friday afternoon, August 25.

Of the seven advisory committees set up, Orthodox Presbyterian representatives could only function on four. Mr. Galbraith served on the committee dealing with matters of synodical organization, finance, and membership. Mr. Knight served as reporter for the committee on church office and revision of

# The Presbyterian Guardian

EDITOR  
JOHN J. MITCHELL

All correspondence should be addressed to The Presbyterian Guardian, 7401 Old York Road, Phila., Pa. 19126

## Letters

### Blessing on boardwalk

A few weeks ago it was a privilege for me and my family to attend the Calvary Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Wildwood, N. J. We received a real blessing and fellowship in Christ.

The Sunday evening worship service held at the Boardwalk Chapel was an unforgettable experience. From 6:15 to 7:15 nine students from Dordt College presented a program of testimony in word and song. Many people on

the boardwalk stopped to listen to the exceptional music being projected over the loudspeakers.

The evening worship service began at 7:15 with enthusiastic singing. There was a great deal of singing throughout the service surrounding the relevant message presented by the Rev. Richard Gerber. Among the listeners, I noticed two young men in swim suits holding surf boards. These surfers along with the rest of the unique congregation were challenged to come to know in a personal way the God of the Scriptures.

Worshipping on the boardwalk a rich spiritual experience we will long remember. Our prayer is that God will continue to bless this significant witness in his Name by the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. We could not help but think of the tremendous contrast between the purpose of the Chapel and all the other activity on the boardwalk. How thrilled we were to learn of the Dordt students who gave of their time on a regular basis each week.

Donald Dykstra  
Office Manager, Back to God Hour  
Chicago, Illinois

the synodical constitution. Mr. Gaffin functioned in the area of ecumenical relations, and Mr. Shepherd on theological issues including the doctrines of Scripture and eschatology. Orthodox Presbyterian interests with respect to the Fourth Commandment (the "Sabbath question") were ably represented by brethren of the Westminster Presbyterian tradition from Australia and Scotland.

(Future issues of the *Guardian* will examine in more detail some of the synodical actions in these and other areas.)

### The actions of Synod

Synod successfully defeated two motions to change its name to "Reformed Ecumenical Council" or "Reformed Ecumenical Assembly of Churches." Objection to the name "Synod" was directed against the churchly character of that term with its implication of power to make decisions binding upon the member churches. The Synod's constitution, however, does not grant the Synod any such power.

It is good that the "Synod" was retained. The churchly character of the assembly can hardly be denied, however Synod might choose to think of itself. It would also be inconsistent to criticize the World Council of Churches for failing to exercise discipline in cases of apostasy from the faith and then undercut the possibility of exercising discipline within the RES by backing off from thinking of itself as a synod. It would seem better for the RES to strive to be a synod in the full sense of the word than to rest content with being a para-ecclesiastical organization (doing the work of the church without being a church) for which there is even less ground in Scripture.

The 1972 Synod proved to be less productive than could have been hoped for; in several respects it was genuinely disappointing. The race issue commanded less attention than previously and no significant progress was made. The doctrine of Scripture was not directly before the synod. A few

(Continued on page 127)

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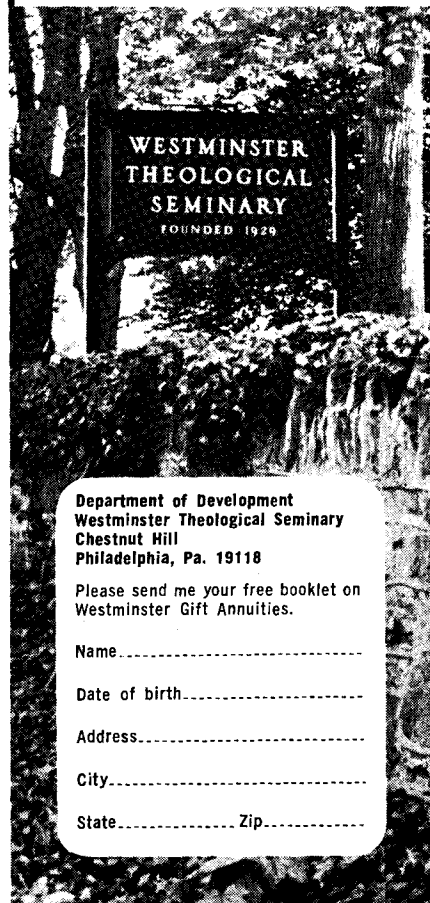
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The first part of this article, setting forth the authors' reasons for seeking an "educational creed" for Christian schools rather than the "institutional church" creeds, appeared in the previous issue of the *Guardian*. This is the concluding portion and suggests what an "educational creed" might include.

The whole article was first published in the *International Reformed Bulletin*, Summer 1970 (1677 Gention Drive, S.E., Grand Rapids, MI 49508).

The authors are members of the faculty of the Institute for Christian Studies, 229 College St. W., Toronto 2b, Canada.

# Confessing Christ in Education

James H. Olthuis

Bernard Zylstra

## TOWARDS AN EDUCATIONAL CREED

An educational confession that purports to be scriptural should be most explicit in regard to a number of fundamental matters. And since such a confession must be a living document, it should speak out especially on the key issues of the day. To begin with, over against the encroachments of the overwhelming humanist context of education, an educational confession must emphatically state that the foundation of all nurture and training is to be found in the revealed Word of God.

### The multiform but one Word of God

The supreme standard for all matters of education shall be the Written Word of God, known as the Old and New Testament Scriptures, as it opens our eyes to know the Word of God as the structuring and upholding principle of creation, and as it leads us to confess Jesus Christ as the Word Incarnate.

Confessing that the Scriptures are profitable for instruction (2 Timothy 3:16), we must go to the Scriptures to be instructed as to the nature of the Word of God. The first thing we discover is that the current debates about the nature of the Word of God are misplaced and indeed out of order. Today "liberals" are concerned to maintain that only Christ is the Word — if they are even willing to grant that — and "conservatives" are convinced that the Holy Scripture as well as Christ is the Word. Both groups are beside the point on an important issue. For the Scriptures emphatically testify that "by His Word the heavens were made, by the breath of His mouth all the stars . . . . He spoke; and it came to be. He commanded; it sprang into being" (Psalm 33:6-9). The Psalmist further testifies that "the waters are frozen at his touch; He sends forth his word and it melts them" (Psalm 147:17f.). "Fire and hail, snow and mist, stormy winds fulfilling His Word" (Psalm 148:8). "By the Word of God heavens existed long ago" (2 Peter 3:5f.).

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. When liberals and conservatives alike ignore this plain testimony of the Scriptures, they emasculate their confession that Christ and the Scriptures are the Word. For without the biblical view that the Word

of God structures and directs creation, it is impossible to understand the meaning and purpose of the Scriptures as the Lamp by which mankind is to walk in creation. Further, without the biblical view of the Word as the Law-Word for creation, it is impossible to do justice to the Word Incarnate as He in whom all things exist and cohere (cf. Ephesians 1, Colossians 1). Isolating Christ from that Law-Word one cannot begin to understand properly the confession of John 1 that all things were made through the Word and that without Him nothing was made. One cannot grasp the meaning of Hebrews 1 that the Son of God sustains the universe by His Word of power.

The Christian church must recover the fulness and unity of the Word of God. The Word of God is one. But since man's fall, that Word comes to us in a three-fold form. When mankind fell in Adam, it no longer heard and understood the Word in creation. To make it possible again for man to hear and do the Word, and thus live, God gave the Scriptures to enlighten man as to his place, his nature and his task. Finally, in the "last days He has spoken to us in His Son" (Hebrews 1:1). The Word in its unity and in its forms is the Power of God to life. That Word is "alive and active. It cuts more deeply than any two-edged sword" (Hebrews 4:12).

Since the Word is one, it is as illegitimate to play off its forms against each other (e.g., "Do you go by the Law-Word or the Scriptures?") as it is to deny that all the forms are the Word of God. In order to obey the Word of God Written it is necessary to confess that the Word is not exhausted in the Scriptures. The Word of God is every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. And since the Lord is faithful and His words trustworthy, the words of God are the one Word.

### Fundamental principles for education

After the basis article concerning the Word of God as the foundation of education, an educational creed should contain a statement of fundamental principles relevant to education. The range of such a list depends upon a variety of factors, notably depth of insight into educational issues normed by the Scriptures.

During recent years two North American educational institutions have been engaged in the formulation of a



coherent and up-to-date educational creed. Already in the early sixties the Association for the Advancement of Christian Scholarship accepted such a creed as the heart of its constitution. (See *Bulletin 1970-1971* of the Institute for Christian Studies, p.4f.) More recently the staff of Trinity Christian College, Palos Heights, Illinois, also proposed a provisional statement of educational principles. And the association which is responsible for the Free University of Amsterdam recently accepted a new formulation of the basis article in its constitution. Finally, Calvin College has published the excellent study, *Christian Liberal Arts Education*, a report of the Calvin College curriculum committee (Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., Grand Rapids).

The newly accepted basis article of the Free University is brief: "The Association (for scientific education on a reformed basis), for all of the activity that proceeds from her, especially for the scientific teaching and research which occur at the Free University, stands on the basis of the Gospel of Jesus Christ which, according to the revelation in the Holy Scriptures, calls man in his entire life to the service and glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and in this to the service of one's neighbor."

The educational creed of the Association for the Advancement of Christian Scholarship and the provisional statement of Trinity Christian College are more elaborate. In the following paragraphs we will rely heavily on these statements in describing some of the elements that we think should be part of an educational creed.

1. *Life.* Human life in its entirety is religion; it is service of God or of an idol. Education is therefore never neutral but unfolds in obedience or disobedience to the Lord.
2. *Creation.* God created the world in all its ways by His Word and upholds it by His Word. The meaning of creation is focused in the covenantal communion of God with man in Christ. In the fall of Adam mankind chose not to have this communion with Jehovah God. This root disobedience is sin.
3. *Scripture.* The Scriptures, the Word of God Written, teach us of God, of His Word which structures creation, of man as God's servant, and of Christ as the Redeemer.
4. *Christ.* Christ, the Word Incarnate, redeems and renews all of life, including education, from the power of sin.
5. *Knowledge.* Knowledge of God, of His Word, and of creation, is the work of the Holy Spirit in man's heart. He sets us in the truth and directs us to educate in accordance with the Word.
6. *Teaching office.* The Body of Christ is called upon to subdue and develop the earth by, among other things, guiding students into a deeper understanding of God's world and its history. Through the execution of this teaching office in the school pupils and students are to attain cultural maturity grounded in the biblical faith so that they can take up their specific responsibilities and vocations in life in a manner pleasing to the Lord.
7. *Scholarship.* The communal pursuit of theoretic

thought is also a matter of obedience to the Lord. Research must be initiated in order to develop a systematic account of the structure of creation. In this way man's knowledge can be deepened and his life's activities more meaningfully ordered.

8. *Reformation.* Teaching and scholarship not biblically normed is still teaching and scholarship because the structure of creation is one and holds for all men. Thus, even though their findings and overall perspectives are distorted and fragmented, teachers and scholars who are not committed to faith in Christ can provide a valuable contribution toward understanding creation. However, since unbelief expresses a total spiritual vision, it deeply affects and distorts the direction of education. For this reason, the biblical way of Christian education is to reform the scholarship of those who are not in Christ rather than to annex it in the way of accommodation.

9. *Freedom and responsibility.* Teaching and research, executed in harmony with relevant norms, are free and responsible activities of men called to these tasks. The teaching staff of an educational institution, under the care and supervision of the proper governing bodies, is directly and communally responsible to the Lord for the execution of the educational task. The responsible freedom of the educator and scholar must be protected against any constraint or domination of the state, the industrial complex, the church, or other societal structure.

10. *Curriculum.* The educational curriculum is the unifying framework which ties the teaching staff, the students, and the subject matter together in the setting of the school. While parents have the responsibility for determining the spiritual direction of their children's education, the body of educators in the Christian community has the office of articulating the content of the educational curriculum.

11. *The child in the school.* The student as an image-bearer of the Lord is a whole person to be guided in the educational process toward responsible maturity in preparing for his calling in the unfolding of creation and the coming of the Kingdom of God. A Christian view of the child in the educational setting rejects the classical curriculum-centered approach since it tends to reduce students to the status of intellectual absorbers of information without paying heed to the individuality of the child. At the same time, since education takes place within the structures of creation, a Christian view of education rejects the child-centered approach in which creation is considered as a chaos without order and in which man is heralded as the creator rather than unfold of order and meaning. In the curriculum-centered view the teacher's authority becomes an end in itself; in the child-centered view the pupil's freedom is uncurtailed; in a biblical view the authority of the teaching office, given by God is for the sake of the freedom and responsible nurture of the pupil.

The basic focus in education is not on the teacher-curriculum — the "subject matter" in the

traditional sense—nor on the student. The teaching team of a school, through the unifying curriculum, must guide and lead the pupils so that they come to learn about creation in the context of the all-inclusive nature of the Kingdom of God. In this light the students in the school are not to be taught adjustment to the morality or the prevailing attitudes of our society; instead they should be led to understand the norms which hold for the various sectors of life as normed dimensions of the Lord's Kingdom and Reign in human history. In this way the school takes its place in leading the child to the understanding that life is meaningful if that child assumes his place in society as one of God's representatives.

## Conclusion

These statements are sufficient to indicate the direction that we think the Christian community should follow in the formulation of an educational creed. Our suggestions here are tentative and not at all complete. For instance, we have not dealt with the relationship between the family, the state, and education. We hope to do this in another context at a later time. In this article it was our intent to place the matter of confessing Christ as Lord in education in a somewhat different perspective. Since confession is a communal endeavor on the part of Christ-believers, we hope that many readers will respond with constructive comments.

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## EDITOR'S COMMENT

We hope that the discussion of the authors' concept of the three-fold Word of God, presented elsewhere in this issue of the *Guardian*, will prove truly constructive. We also hope that some comment on details of their proposed "educational creed" will also serve that purpose.

1. *The creed is not scriptural.* A creed could be whatever its authors wanted. But this one seeks to be scriptural, to be "biblically normed"—which is what a creed for truly Christian schools should be. We do not feel that the proposed creed meets that standard.

Many of its details are derived from Scripture; many others, however, are not directly or accurately drawn from that source. Nowhere does Scripture suggest that we must bring our children to "cultural maturity," though this may be desirable. Nowhere does Scripture require us to "develop a systematic account of the structure of creation," even if that were possible. Nor does Scripture suggest that schools should be "protected against any constraint or domination . . . [by] the church"; on the contrary, all that we do as Christians is to be done in submission to the oversight of Christ's appointed elders in the church.

This is a suggested creed. If adopted, it would presumably be required of teachers to submit to it. But to ask anyone to submit himself to anything that is not clearly drawn from the Scriptures is to ask far too much.

2. *The creed has serious omissions.* It may be unfair to talk of omissions when dealing with a brief statement. Yet there are biblical truths, vital to the educational situation,

that have been totally overlooked.

The most serious omission, in our judgment, is the absence of any accounting of the presence and effects of sin. The paragraph on *Creation* says nothing about the subversive effect of sin on this creation, much less does it mention God's curse on his creation (cf. Romans 8:22). How can a Christian school (or any school) bring its pupils to a right perception of this world without a thorough recognition of the presence and effects of man's sin in and on that world?

3. *The creed suffers a serious confusion.* "Christ . . . redeems and renews all of life, including education, from the power of sin." This is perhaps the most ill-conceived statement in the document. Nor do we believe it is an isolated slip of the pen, for this idea of Christ's universal renewing of everything is present in much of the writings of the AACs.

Nowhere does Scripture suggest that Christ redeems or renews *all* of life; much of life is reserved for the fire of final purification (2 Peter 3:7). Nor does Scripture suggest that Christ is *presently* renewing this *present* world; rather it says he will do so in the future (same reference). We live in a sin-plagued world, a God-cursed world, and even our Christian works must pass through fire (1 Corinthians 3:12, 13).

Even the regenerate (and certainly not all Christian school pupils or even teachers are necessarily born again!) are not free from active sin. Even such a one as Paul found himself sinning against his own desires (Romans 7:15-25). We are freed from God's curse, freed from the reigning power of sin in our hearts; we are, however, still sinning. To ignore this truth is to confuse the whole educational process.

Throughout the whole article, the authors show no awareness of the pervasive and pernicious effects of sin, particularly in the realm of the mind. Neither do they ever mention Christ's work as the *Savior from sin* — the work through which he earned the right to sit as Lord! Failing to include an adequate concept of sin and of the work of Christ as Savior has left this "creed" afloat on a sea of confused and unfounded optimism.

What our Christian schools need is a clear statement of biblical truth on such basics as God, man and sin, Christ and his work. But just those basics, and others of importance to the educational process, are to be found in the Reformed creeds and catechisms. We do not need any "educational creed" of the sort suggested by Olthuis and Zylstra; we do need Christian schools firmly committed to the Reformed creedal standards. Then, on that basis, we can go forward to work out the implications of these scriptural truths for the Christian school situation.

Note: We have printed "Confessing Christ in Education" so that readers might see the background of some of the issues raised by Professor Frame in "The Quiet Crisis" (in the April *Guardian*). We also hope that this open presentation and the rather strongly negative criticisms may serve to alert us all to the need to return again to God's Word in the Scriptures as the *only* infallible rule for our faith and practice — in Christian schools as elsewhere.

—J.J.M.

# The Word of God in the Cosmonomic Philosophy

JOHN M. FRAME

The "philosophy of the cosmonomic idea," first formulated in the 1920s by Herman Dooyeweerd and his associates at the Free University of Amsterdam, has in the last few years become a popular movement in Reformed circles in North America.

Organizations such as the Association for the Advancement of Christian Scholarship (AACS), the Institute for Christian Studies in Toronto, and the National Association for Christian Political Action (NACPA) have been formed to study, revise and apply the insights of this philosophy to various areas of human life. This movement has become influential also in older Christian organizations, such as the National Union of Christian Schools, and has attracted some enthusiastic followers in the Christian Reformed Church and the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

Serious criticisms, however, have been raised against many of the distinctive teachings of this philosophy, and perhaps the most serious have been directed toward the "cosmonomic" view of the "Word of God."

This article [in two parts] will attempt to discuss some of these issues in a popular, though hopefully not oversimplified way. We should keep in mind at the outset that not *everyone* in the AACS, for example, would accept *all* the views here attributed to the cosmonomic philosophy. Nevertheless, it is clear that a general consensus has developed in the movement; published works from members of the circle never deviate very far from the position I shall attempt to describe.

## I. THE WORD AS EVENT

Dooyeweerd is fond of emphasizing "the distinction between the Word of God in its full and actual reality and in its restricted sense as the object of theoretical thought."<sup>1</sup> We must ask first of all, what is that "Word of God in its full and actual reality"? This concept is not altogether clear to me, but certain things may be said about it:

### 1. The word to man's heart

The word in its "full" sense is addressed to the *heart* of man, not merely to his intellect, senses, aesthetic sensitivity, or any other "aspect" of man's nature.<sup>2</sup> It strikes the very core of my being and determines the overall direction of my life. Paul Schrotenboer, one of the leading

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*Note:* Except in direct quotations from others, where their own choice of style is followed, God's word has not been capitalized in this article except where it may be used as a title for Scripture.

American "cosmonomists" says,

God does not just give us rules for this and that; He gives us a law word that directs the entire life of man. God's word does not direct itself to one or other action or situation but it directs itself to man's heart and it takes in the entire creation.<sup>3</sup>

It is certainly scriptural to say as these men do that the word addresses man's *heart* and effects *comprehensive change* in our life-direction. I doubt very much, however, whether the Bible justifies such a severe split between comprehensive direction and "rules for this and that" as Schrotenboer envisages.

God's speech, according to Scripture, does make a comprehensive demand upon human life (e.g., Deut. 6:4f.; 1 Cor. 10:31). But it also makes many *detailed* demands (e.g., Exod. 21-23; 1 Cor. 16:1f.). These detailed demands are not in conflict with the comprehensive demand; on the contrary, they are manifestations of it. It is true enough, of course, that "God does not *just* give us rules for this and that"; but to say that "God's word does not direct itself to one or other action or situation" is going too far, and places an arbitrary restriction upon the relevance of God's word.

## 2. The word as process

The word in its "full" sense is an *event*, a *process*—the total process by which God's word reaches the heart of man.<sup>4</sup> Prophetic utterance, biblical inscription, preaching, the testimony of the natural world—all of these are *elements* in the process, but none is the *complete* process. These, therefore, are the "word of God" only in a secondary and derivative sense.<sup>5</sup>

Again, I must question the scripturality of this construction. It is true, no doubt, that such a "process" of revelation exists. But Scripture rarely puts any particular emphasis on it, and rarely even designates such a process as "word of God," let alone making this process the Word *par excellence!*

In Scripture, we should remember, the term "revelation" is rarely used to describe divine-human communication. In general, the God of Scripture is not a God who "reveals himself"; he is a God who *speaks*. He is a God who speaks *words*, and those words may be heard or not heard, obeyed or ignored, by man. Therefore, when God speaks to man, there may or may not be a "process of revelation" by which God's words take root in the human heart. If man ignores or rejects the word, there is no "revelation-event"; but, in such a case the word remains the word! The word remains powerful to judge the rebellion of that man.

The point is that Scripture does not elevate any "event of revelation" to the position of Word *par excellence*. God's words are God's words, whether part of a total "process" or not. His spoken words, written words, prophetic words—all have an equal status on a scriptural view. It is true that these words all point "beyond themselves" in a sense to the one who speaks them and to their divinely ordained purpose. But that fact does not make them the word in a "secondary or derivative" sense.

### 3. The word as power

Further, on the cosmonomic view, this word as "event" is conceived of as a "power."<sup>6</sup> This is understandable, for it is precisely the event by which *changes* are wrought in the heart of man (and the rest of creation also). Members of this school of thought do not often refer to Christians as those who "believe" or "obey" the word of God; they prefer to speak of them as those "in the grip of"<sup>7</sup> or "directed by"<sup>8</sup> the word.

These latter expressions are more indicative of the "powerful" character of the word. The emphasis is a scriptural one. But in this philosophy it is often not properly balanced by a corresponding emphasis upon the *meaning* of the word. The word of God according to Scripture, after all, is not a *blind* power. The power of the word is the power of God's *language*; its "effects" are the effects of *language*.

God's creatures obey his *commands*, believe his *statements*, trust his *promises*, rebel against his *directives*, reject his *expressions* of love, etc. (cf. Psalm 119). Christians, furthermore, are not "gripped" by the word as by some irrational force. They *hear* the word, *believe* it, *trust* it, *obey* it.

These are scriptural ways of talking, and the lack of emphasis upon them in the cosmonomic philosophy is disturbing. For in many liberal theological movements today there is the tendency precisely to see God's word as a "blind power"—a power that "affects" us even when the language itself may be false. We could wish that the cosmonomic thinkers would use language better calculated to avoid confusion with such false modernistic teachings.

### 4. The word, beyond analysis

In the "full" sense the word, on the cosmonomic view, may not be *theoretically analyzed*.<sup>9</sup> Why?

a. Dooyeweerd tells us that the word in this "full" sense is "a matter of life and death to us, and not a question of theoretical reflection."<sup>10</sup> I must say that this argument rather perplexes me. I never have been able to see why a "matter of life and death" cannot also be a "matter of theoretical reflection." The present ecological crisis is in one sense a "matter of life and death"; but surely no one would argue that this makes the ecological crisis incapable of scientific investigation. On the contrary, that fact makes the scientific study of ecology all the more urgent!

The word of God, of course, is a "matter of life and death" in a much stronger sense. But it surely is not evident that this fact makes it any less capable of analysis.

b. There are other arguments made by these thinkers on this point. The "central theme" of Scripture—creation, fall, and redemption— "cannot become the theoretical object of theological thought, since it is the very starting point of the latter, insofar as theology is really biblical."<sup>11</sup>

I do not doubt, of course, that the word must be our

"starting point." It furnishes the basic presuppositions of all thinking that is to be truly Christian. And, to be sure, there seems to be something paradoxical about the idea of "analyzing one's presuppositions." After all, how can we analyse them except on the basis that those very presuppositions supply. But that paradox is only on the surface. In fact, "examining presuppositions" is something we do all the time in theology, and *should* do. These presuppositions (insofar as we hold them consistently) will indeed supply the basis for their own analysis; but that does not invalidate the analysis. To put it in simpler terms, each of us tries to *understand* his basic commitments in order to understand himself better and to carry out those commitments more effectively. To say this can't be done is a manifest absurdity.

c. Schrotenboer argues: "In the sense of that one central, multiform Word of God, the Word is not the object that we investigate, anymore than we investigate God."<sup>12</sup> Here he seems to be saying that the word-as-event partakes of God's own incomprehensibility, so that to "investigate" the word is an act of presumption, an undue exaltation of the human mind against the mystery of God.

Now it is certainly true that God's thoughts are not our thoughts, that God cannot be comprehended by any human "investigation." But we must also keep in mind that God has *spoken* to us, and has spoken *clearly*. Because God has taken the initiative, we can understand the word and can understand him through it. In one sense, therefore, "investigation" of the word—and of God himself!—is our divinely given privilege and duty! We *must* search the Scriptures so as to understand God's self-revelation to the best of our God-given ability.

But why then should that "searching" exclude the use of sophisticated theoretical equipment? Surely such exclusion is arbitrary. We may not, to be sure, go beyond the bounds of what God has revealed. That indeed would be presumption. But we *must* "study" the word with all the "scientific" and "nonscientific" tools at our disposal. To forbid such study is not an act of pious humility; it is a denial of the clarity of God's self-expression, and an arbitrary limitation upon the believer's understanding of (and obedience to!) that revelation.

### 5. The word as basic theme

Although these thinkers insist that the word-as-event cannot be theoretically analyzed, they do believe that it can be *characterized* in various (presumably "non-theoretical") ways. Dooyeweerd describes the word in this sense as "the basic theme of Holy Scripture, namely that of creation, fall into sin and redemption by Jesus Christ in the communion of the Holy Spirit."<sup>13</sup>

Note also the following in which, as I understand it, Dooyeweerd is expounding again the "basic meaning" of the word-event, but here in terms of its *normative* force: "The entire divine Law for God's creation displays its radical unity in the central commandment of Love, addressed to the heart, i.e., religious center of human life."<sup>14</sup>

I have no quarrel with these as *general* descriptions of the content of the word of God. We shall see later (in part II, 2) how these descriptions can be used in unwholesome ways. Remember also the danger noted earlier (in I, 1) of thinking that the word supplies comprehensive, but not specific direction to us. The emphasis on general de-

scriptions of the contents of the word is that such an emphasis may encourage such thinking.

<sup>1</sup> Dooyeweerd, H., *In the Twilight of Western Thought* (Nutley, N.J., Craig Press, 1968), p. 143.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 136; cf. pp. 42, 125.

<sup>3</sup> Schrotenboer, P., "Orthodoxy and the Bible," *Calvinist-Contact* (Feb. 21, 28, 1972), I, p. 3. Cf. de Graaf, A., *Understanding the Scriptures* (Hamilton, Ont., Guardian Press, 1968), pp. 9ff., 29, *passim*.

<sup>4</sup> Schrotenboer, *op. cit.*, I, p. 4; II, p. 3. ("We will not understand the many thousands of words in the Bible unless we see the One Word, God-in-his-coming-to-me." In an unpublished discussion paper, "The Bible as the Word of God," pp. 17ff., Schrotenboer expounds on the proposition that "revelation is process.")

<sup>5</sup> Schrotenboer, "The Bible as the Word of God," pp. 6, 17ff.

<sup>6</sup> Dooyeweerd, *op. cit.*, pp. 42, 125, 136, 144; Schrotenboer, "Orthodoxy, Etc.," II, p. 3 ("not so much information and rules but Power"); Von Meyenfeldt, F., *The Meaning of Ethos* (Hamilton, Ont., Guardian Press, 1964), pp. 27ff.; Runner, H. E., *The Relation of the Bible to Learning* (Hamilton, Ont., Guardian Press, n.d.), p. 36, *passim*.

<sup>7</sup> Dooyeweerd, *op. cit.*, p. 125; Schrotenboer, "Orthodoxy, Etc.," I, p. 4.

<sup>8</sup> Schrotenboer, "Orthodoxy, Etc.," II, p. 3.

<sup>9</sup> Dooyeweerd, *op. cit.*, pp. 42, 125, 136, 143f.; Schrotenboer, "The Bible as the Word of God," pp. 16ff.

<sup>10</sup> Dooyeweerd, *op. cit.*, p. 125.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 144.

<sup>12</sup> Schrotenboer, "Orthodoxy, Etc.," I, p. 4; cf. Dooyeweerd, *op. cit.*, p. 136.

<sup>13</sup> Dooyeweerd, *op. cit.*, p. 136; cf. pp. 41f., 125, 144.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 123; cf. Schrotenboer, "Orthodoxy, Etc.," I, p. 3; De Graaff, *op. cit.*, pp. 24, 35, 37f.; Von Meyenfeldt, *op. cit.*, pp. 41ff; Zylstra, B., "Thy Word Our Life," *International Reformed Bulletin* (Spring-Summer 1972), p. 60f.

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*John Frame is a professor in systematic theology at Westminster Theological Seminary. In the second portion of this article he discusses the "forms" in which the Word of God can become an "object of theoretical thought" according to the cosmological thinkers. Of particular interest is the relation of the word of God to and in creation and the word of God in Scripture and their normativity for us today.*

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## Southern Presbyterians form "Vanguard Presbytery"

Savannah, Ga.—A group of sixteen ministers and elders, most from churches that have separated from the Presbyterian Church, U. S. ("Southern"), formed a new and independent presbytery. The new organization is to be a "Provisional Presbytery for Southern Presbyterian and Reformed Churches Uniting." The Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms were adopted as doctrinal standards; the Book of Church Order of the Southern Church was also adopted, but in the form it had before 1934, thus excluding recent provisions for women elders and ministers and other changes unsatisfactory to conservatives.

Unrest among Southern Presbyterians over their denomination's increasingly liberal theological trends, social activism, and ecumenical involvements, has led several congregations to leave the parent church already. Others are discussing ways to do so in the near future. Estimates of the number of churches that may eventually leave the denomination run as high as 400.

The chief stumbling block in the way of separation is the property issue. Legal decisions tend to give ultimate

control of church property to the presbytery. Two churches in Savannah have succeeded in taking their property with them, though the legal maneuvering extended all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court. But the actual legal decision in that case may not have much weight in other cases.

The main hope of conservatives in the Southern Church is that an "escape clause" in a Plan of Union with the United Presbyterian Church will permit congregations to leave with their property. Whether the "escape clause" will be in the final draft of the plan is a moot question at present; several "liberal" voices have condemned it as "unpresbyterian."

Moderator of the new "Vanguard Presbytery" is the Rev. Todd W. Allen, pastor of the Eastern Heights Presbyterian Church (independent) in Savannah (one of the two churches that kept its property). The Rev. Linwood G. Wilkes was named clerk; he is pastor of the Tabb Street Presbyterian Church of Petersburg, Va., and together with his congregation severed relations with Hanover Presbytery on August 20. This church hopes to keep it property in downtown Petersburg, but almost certainly will have to defend itself in court against the claims of Hanover Presbytery.

Meanwhile, the Conservative Coalition, representing several conservative

groups within the Southern Church, has been working to line up support for the establishment of a "continuing church" in the South, one that will be true to the Scriptures and the Westminster Standards. Uncertainties about the "escape clause" in the Plan of Union, and delays in the presentation of the Plan to the respective general assemblies, has left conservatives uncertain about how and when to make a break. Formation of the "Vanguard Presbytery" may well precipitate the long-expected "split."

Those who went through the traumatic events that led to the formation of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church in 1936 will certainly feel interest and sympathy with these genuine Presbyterians in the South. If there is to be a "continuing church" there it will be welcomed by all those who love the Reformed faith. Our prayers should be with these churches.

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### You're moving, too?

It seems as though everyone is moving. That's fine with us--- IF you'll tell us one month in advance. It will cost you 6¢ to mail us a change of address. It may cost us over 35¢ to find out from the postal service and cause you to miss one or more issues of the *Guardian*.

## Creation Research Society defended

I wish to comment on the letter from Dr. Davis A. Young (in the February issue of the *Guardian*). In it Dr. Young expressed strong disagreement with Dr. Henry M. Morris and other members of the Creation Research Society. He charged that the work of the Society might in the long run do great harm to the faith of many Christian people.

Let me assure you that nothing could be further from the truth. The Creation Research Society is made up of members who are born-again Christians with a strong faith in the inerrancy of the Bible. The members are all creationists and accept the validity of the worldwide flood of Noah described in Genesis 6-8. Voting membership in the Society, now numbering over 400, requires a master's degree or higher in some field of science. Thus, all voting members are scientifically trained people.

The Society publishes an excellent quarterly Journal containing many fine scientific papers exposing the weaknesses and fallacies in evolutionary theory and demonstrating that the facts of science are much more satisfactorily correlated within the creation framework. Members participate in seminars to present scientific evidence related to the question of creation and evolutionary theory. They are well received on the campuses of major universities. We have done much to increase the faith of tens of thousands of believers and are winning some of the uncommitted to faith in the Bible as the Word of God. Undoubtedly, the Society and its members are having a most significant impact upon the thinking of believers and nonbelievers as well; and experience has demonstrated that we are having a most favorable effect upon the faith of the believers.

Of course, we are being denounced by evolutionists and by the uniformitarian geologists. We certainly would expect little else from those quarters. Let us remember, however, that the philosophy that dominates the scientists of our day is that of a completely naturalistic, mechanistic view of this world and of all reality. According to this view the only source of truth is that which can be derived from a study of the material universe. They deny any possibility of the supernatural. They assume that organic evolution must be

true and then devote their science to proving this assumption.

Dr. Young in his letter insists that we defer to the conclusions of paleo-anthropologists, Pleistocene specialists, paleontologists, and geologists when considering earth history and the fossil remains of plants and animals. We hasten to point out, however, that almost all of these men are unbelievers and, almost to a man, they reject the authority of Scripture. They assume that organic evolution is a fact and seek to fit all of their data within this framework. They, of course, approach the interpretation of scientific data with a set of preconceived ideas and prejudices. Their evaluation of the evidence as it relates to origins, therefore, is highly subjective and cannot be considered an objective scientific evaluation. Christians would be most ill-advised to accept the judgment of such men over the judgment of other, scientifically trained men who are born-again Christians and who have full faith and confidence in the Bible as the Word of God.

I would urge your readers to consider carefully the words found in 1 Corinthians 1:18-31. I would like to urge all your readers to write to the Creation Research Society, 2717 Cranbrook Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48104, for further information on the Society. In addition to the 400 voting members, the Society includes about 1700 associate members who receive the Journal and support the activities of the Society.

I would also urge your readers to become members of the Bible-Science Association, Box 1016, Caldwell, ID 83605. This society publishes an excellent monthly newsletter containing many fine articles on the Bible and science, especially concerning the question of creation and evolution theory. The newsletter is designed for the layman.

Finally, I would suggest that your readers write to us at the Institute for Creation Research for information concerning our ministry and activities. Our address is 2716 Madison Ave., San Diego, CA 92116.

Duane T. Gish, Ph.D.

Institute for Creation Research

*Ed. Note:* We rejoice in the commitment of the Creation Research Society

and its affiliates to the Scriptures, and we agree that its members have done much to gain a hearing for Scripture and even to strengthen the faith of some in the truth of God's Word.

Yet we share Dr. Young's concern that the Society's approach may harm the faith of some. This concern arises from the setting forth by Society spokesmen of their own theories, based on observed data and certain Scripture truths or interpretations, as "a Christian answer" to evolutionists. All too often the uncritical reader gains the impression that this is "the Christian answer."

For example, the Society regularly advocates the theory that Noah's worldwide flood is the main explanation for fossil remains. This is a *possible theory*, but not the *only theory* that can be squared with Scripture. I tend to agree with it, in fact; but a theory—a product of human reasoning, even born-again Christian reasoning—is still an error-prone human product. By failing to keep a clear distinction between man-made theory and God-given truth, advocates of any such "Christian" theories pose a real danger to faith in God's Word.

The danger arises when a better theory arises or when new data requires adjustments. Those who uncritically accepted the old one as "the Christian answer" are now shaken to the root—and their faith in Scripture is involved because the old theory purported to be scriptural. This is not to say that the Society deliberately makes such claims for its theories or that it is unaware of the problem; it is to say that the danger is not sufficiently guarded against and is thus a real danger especially for young believers.

The Society is also rather uncritical in its willingness to accept the theorizing of anyone both born again and "scientifically trained." But a Christian physicist is no better qualified to speak about cosmology than any other Christian layman. A theory of fossil-formation devised by an engineer (e.g., Dr. Henry M. Morris) has no greater claim to credibility than one by a psychologist. Dr. Young did not ask us to defer to the conclusions of non-Christian specialists in the geological sciences; he did ask for Christians to enter these fields of specialization where their competencies could have real impact. His call is well-taken!

— J. J. M.

## New units at

### Quarryville Home

Quarryville, Pa.—On September 4, the Quarryville Presbyterian Home dedicated two additions to its plant. One section is to provide accommodations for 125 retired persons, and the other is a 44-bed addition to the convalescent unit of the Home.

The Quarryville Home is a Christian non-profit institution providing security and normal living in a truly Christian environment for older people. In operation since 1948, the Home is supported largely by members of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod and the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

Presiding at the service of dedication was the Rev. Franklin S. Dyrness, administrator of the Home. The dedicatory address was given by the Rev. F. Seth Dyrness, Jr. Over 600 people were present on an ideal day.

The accompanying architect's drawing shows the newer portions in the foreground and include the whole plant of the Home. The view from the windows of the Home is of beautiful Pennsylvania farm country. Information about the Home can be secured by writing to the Quarryville Presbyterian Home, R.D. 2, Box 12-A, Quarryville, Pa. 17566.



*(Continued from page 119)*

denominations, including the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, had submitted reports on the authority of Scripture to the Gereformeerde Kerken (Reformed Churches) in the Netherlands, as requested by the 1968 Synod; but none of these reports called for any action by this year's synod. One day was given to a conference on Scripture, but only toward the end of the day did the heart of the matter come in for significant discussion on the floor. Synod retained its stand against admitting women to the office of ruling and teaching elder, though the place of women in relation to the work of deacons was left open for further discussion. Some positive statement on the role of women in the life and work of the church is a major need today in

the Reformed community.

#### A disappointing conclusion

Most disappointing was the refusal of Synod to declare membership in the RES incompatible with membership in the World Council of Churches as requested by the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. The synod even refused to ask the Gereformeerde Kerken to give an accounting for its membership in the WCC contrary to the advice of previous synods. In addition, because this Dutch denomination is still dealing with Professor Harry Kuitert, whose views concerning the early chapters of Genesis have been declared out of accord with the creedal standards of that church, no action was taken concerning the consistency of the denomination's Reformed testimony.

Without doubt, the Reformed Ecumenical Synod has a worthwhile task to do in maintaining the unity of the Reformed witness throughout the world, and in providing mutual help and encouragement as the churches face new challenges not faced by previous generations. It is difficult to see how the consultations can be productive, however, as long as the discussions remain bogged down in issues where there ought to be no divisions among those with a sincere commitment to the historic Reformed confessions. What kind of future the RES will have will probably be decided by member denominations between the quadrennial meetings, rather than by decisions at them.

—Norman Shepherd  
Ambler, Pa.

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## NUCS Convention

Sioux Center, Iowa—Dordt College was the locale for the 52nd annual convention of the National Union of Christian Schools, meeting August 8-10. Keynote speaker was the Rev. Ron Slater of Peace, Minn., speaking on "Christian Leadership and Covenantal Responsibility."

Workshops in various curriculum areas and school board leadership were held. The annual business meeting of the convention was attended by 117 official delegates from 111 schools. Mr. Paul Mulder, NUCS President pro tem, presided.

## New Addresses

The Rev. Abe W. Ediger (new pastor of Calvary Church), 37 N. Race St., Middletown, PA 17057.

The Rev. Barry R. Hofford (moved to new home), 15627 Bond Mill Rd., Laurel, MD 20810.

The Rev. Raymond E. Commeret, P O Box 156, E. Barre, VT 05649.

Of special interest was a proposed change in the Basis Article of the NUCS constitution. The proposed change has been debated and modified for some time. (See the article on "The Quiet Crisis" by John Frame in the April issue of the *Guardian*.) The NUCS Board of Directors had reconsidered the earlier proposal and now presented a new version. With little debate the proposed article was adopted. It reads:

"The basis of the National Union of Christian Schools is the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, the infallible Word of God, as explicated in Reformed creedal standards."

The Rev. Lionel F. S. Brown, Christ's College, 14 Pu-Ting, Tanshui, Taiwan 251, CHINA.

The Rev. Salvador M. Solis (in new home), 1912 Silverwood La., Los Angeles, CA 90041.

The Rev. Richard L. Horner (with wife Sally and newly arrived twin boys), 127 Temple Circle, Lynchburg, VA 24502.

## In Memoriam: David Munroe

Portland, Ore.—The First Church has felt a great loss at the home-going of Elder David Munroe, who died of a heart attack on July 20. He is survived by his wife, Olive, and three children, Lynne, Joanne (Mrs. Arlo Jackson), and Stephen.

Mr. Munroe united with First Church as a charter member in 1943 and has served his Lord as a ruling elder, church treasurer, Sunday school teacher, member of the choir, Clerk of Session, and Stated Clerk of Presbytery.

"Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints."

## Planning to retire? Moving to California?

Beautiful *Novato* in Marin County, north of the Golden Gate, has an *Orthodox Presbyterian Church* with warm fellowship. For information on *Novato*, write to the pastor, Robert H. Graham, 5 Carmen Ct., Novato, CA 94947, or phone 415-897-5400.

## Westminster crowded with new students

Philadelphia, Pa.—Westminster Theological Seminary began another year of preparing men for the gospel ministry on September 6. Opening exercises featured an address by the Rev. Donald B. Patterson, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Jackson, Miss. Mr. Patterson's address, "Behind and Before," challenged the audience with the words of Isaiah 52:12, where God's people are reminded that the Lord accompanies them both "before and behind."

Enrollment for the current year is up, with over fifty in the entering class and a total of 176. Some classes are crowded to the point that extra sessions are being scheduled. Chapel attendance has left many students standing. May the Lord now add his blessings of grace on this promising group of young men.

