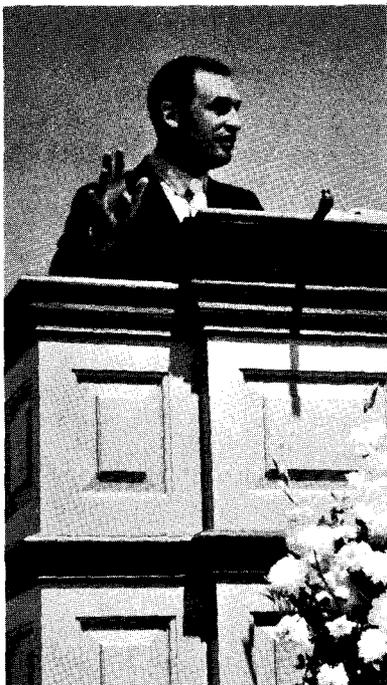
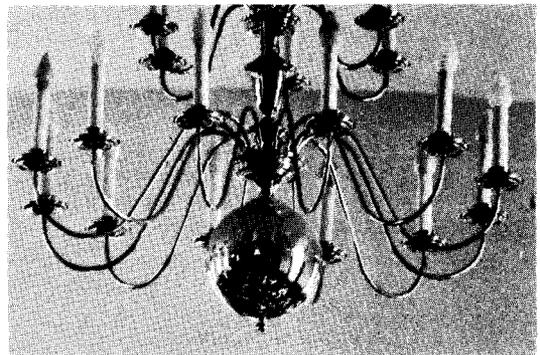


The Presbyterian Guardian

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*The Thirty-Eighth
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Pastor Keller



Emmanuel Orthodox Presbyterian Church

Whence man?

DAVIS A. YOUNG

In the previous articles, we examined the biblical data bearing on the origin of man, and worked out some of the implications of the evolutionary theory for Christian ethics. We concluded that an evolutionary view of man's origin is not only incompatible with the facts of Scripture, but is actually destructive of a genuinely biblical view of the nature of man and of salvation.

Applying Scripture in science

The problem before us in this concluding article is how to apply biblical principles to a scientific study of the origin of man. How is the Christian to interpret the evidence from fossil bones, prehistoric cultural materials, and ancient geological environments?

If the Bible is true, then obviously the *totality* of scientific evidence will be overwhelmingly *for* the special creation of man and *against* the evolution of man from preexistent animal life. The difficulty is that the totality of evidence is *not yet in* on this question, just as it is not in on any other scientific problem. Nor will all the evidence ever be in during this life.

Mankind must develop his scientific interpretations on the basis of partial evidence. To be sure the evidence gradually accumulates; but it is always *partial*. Moreover, the limited evidence available at a particular moment in history may be by no means representative of the total picture. Hence a scientific theory or interpretation can *at best* be but an analog or approximation of the truth. The fossil evidence bearing on the origin and history of man must therefore be interpreted with considerable caution and humility, especially as the field of human prehistory is one in which the emotions tend to run quite high and sometimes can predominate over sober judgment.

The Christian and science

The informed Christian ought to take *very seriously* the available scientific data. He cannot afford to dismiss casually the fact that many fossils of ancient men and man-like creatures have been discovered. The Christian may be disturbed by many facts and he may not like them. But the Christian must also realize that all facts are from God. Therefore, it is wrong to ignore the facts or deal with them lightly.

The Christian must accept the existence of human fossil remains and be willing to think about them, and even be puzzled and perhaps distressed by them. The existence of infallible biblical truth does not imply easy solutions to the problems connected with that truth, nor can it deny that facts seemingly difficult to square with that truth do exist.

There seems to be some tendency for many Christians to look with great distrust at the science of paleoanthropology

(the study of ancient man). The honesty of researchers in this field is questioned; or, it is said that the fossil bones, rightly viewed, really disprove the theory of evolution. This kind of attitude is a very grave mistake and can only harm the Christian cause.

The intellectually honest Christian will recognize the fact that the very nature of science tends to encourage, although it does not guarantee, scientific honesty in reporting the facts. Thus the Christian ought to accept the descriptions of various human and human-like fossil finds. In addition the Christian must realize that the evolutionary interpretation is not based on fancy or atheistic bias. There is abundant physical evidence that can certainly fit into an evolutionary interpretation.

For example, progressively older human fossil remains *in general* tend to bear progressively more ape-like characteristics. Given the available known remains, this apparent progression is a fact. As such it seems to be favorable to the evolutionary hypothesis and this ought to be admitted. At the same time, the *partial* character of the evidence ought never to be forgotten. New fossils may come to light that will alter our present knowledge or interpretations.

Christians will not make any progress in combating evolutionary theory if they remain on general philosophical grounds alone. We must accept the data, and we must take the theory of evolution seriously even if we do not accept it. We must know the enemy in order to defeat him.

There is a very urgent need for Christians to enter the fields of paleontology, anthropology, genetics, sociology, animal behavior, biochemistry, geology, and similar fields, in order to grapple with the facts and theories that directly relate to the evolutionary view of man. We must get down to knowledgeable discussion and interpretation of very specialized clusters of data. We must enter the scientific arena. We must do research, we must publish, we must become scientifically involved. We have long enough dealt with the generalities. Scientists tend not to be impressed by philosophical discussions (wrongly so). They will be impressed far more likely by a novel interpretation of very detailed facts by a competent Christian worker in the field.

Human fossil evidence

Let us turn now to some of the evidence bearing on human origins. Abundant fossil and cultural remains from many parts of the world are suggestive of a physical-cultural continuum between today's man and primitive extinct apes.

Cave deposits in Europe, Israel, and elsewhere contain remains of the famous Neanderthal man. These remains include complete skeletons. Geological evidence suggests that he lived roughly 30,000 to 100,000 years ago. It is

agreed by present workers that Neanderthal was a true human who walked upright and was as intelligent as modern man. His skull was a bit more massive than ours with a slightly lower forehead, somewhat pronounced eyebrow ridges, and a heavier jaw. These anatomical features suggest a primitive nature, and indeed the early view of Neanderthal was that he was a very brutish, stoop-shouldered individual who was much closer to the apes than are we. Today he is accepted as an extinct race of *Homo sapiens*. Neanderthal made and used very highly developed tools and in addition buried his dead in such a way as to indicate that he believed in an afterlife. There is thus little doubt that he was a religious being.

Deposits from China, Java, and Africa have disclosed fossil remains of *Homo erectus*, formerly known as the Java ape-man or Peking man. The deposits date from approximately 250,000 to 750,000 years ago. Again, anthropologists today do not hesitate to consider these creatures true men, even though they were sufficiently different from modern man to suggest the use of a different species name. *Homo erectus* evidently walked upright, but his skull was more "ape-like" than ours. His forehead was very much flatter than ours and his jaw more massive and pronounced. In spite of these differences, when we look at a skull of *Homo erectus* we really do not hesitate to call it a man. This creature also used tools and fire. But there is no evidence as yet that he was religious.

Real problems arise in connection with a still older type known as *Australopithecus*. Numerous fossils of various parts of this creature have been found in deposits throughout eastern and southern Africa that range from one to three million years in age. It is believed that two distinct species of *Australopithecus* existed, both of which were much more ape-like in appearance than was *Homo erectus*. One species was a heavier, taller creature designated *A. robustus*; the other was a lighter, smaller type standing about four feet tall and designated *A. africanus*. It is currently believed by evolutionists that man evolved from the latter, a species that walked upright but perhaps with a slight waddle as indicated by fossil foot bones. The skull had a braincase about one-third as large as ours, and a pronounced muzzle lending it an ape-like rather than human appearance. However, the teeth of *A. africanus* were much more like those of modern man than those of the apes. Numerous simple bone and stone tools have been found in association with fossil bones of *Australopithecus* in the remains of probable dirt living floors. Whether or not *Australopithecus* could be classed as human, there seems little doubt that he was a user and likely a maker of tools.

Fossils suggest evolution

The available evidence of these various fossil men or apes does indeed suggest an evolutionary sequence from ape to man in which cultural development paralleled biological evolution. This interpretation, however, must be unsatisfactory to the Christian.

Yet there is no easy interpretation of these data available to the Christian. The mere fact that human-like fossils have been discovered in deposits that are probably hundreds of thousands of years old is difficult for many Bible-believing Christians to accept. At this point two things must be kept in mind. First, scientific methods for obtaining absolute

ages may well be altered by the discovery of new facts. The true ages of these fossils may be younger than we currently believe. On the other hand they might even be older than we think. Secondly, it must be recognized that Scripture does not tell us how long man has been on the earth.*

*The Bible does not provide data from which the age of creation can be determined. It was once thought that the genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11 did this. The word "begat" does not mean "was the father of," but more generally means "was the progenitor (father, grandfather, or more distant ancestor) of."—*Editor's note.*

If the age of the fossils does not trouble us, what shall we say about the nature of these fossils? Were they men—or apes? Or something else? Most Christians would likely be willing to accept both Neanderthal and *Homo erectus* as true men. But what status shall we accord *Australopithecus*? Could Adam have been an *Australopithecus*? We frankly do not know, for there is as yet no real way to determine anatomically whether *Australopithecus* was human. Since he did not look very much like modern man, most Christians would probably hesitate to consider him truly human.

But then, Scripture does not tell us a thing about the appearance of man when he was first created. The Bible is not a text on human anatomy. To add to the difficulties, *Australopithecus* appears to have been a maker and user of tools. Do these cultural accomplishments mean that he was truly human? Here again, we cannot be certain because we do not know yet whether very intelligent apes might make and use stone tools. Chimpanzees presently make and use extremely simple twig tools to root termites out of their nests. The presence of tools alone does not guarantee that *Australopithecus* was truly man, even though it suggests that he was.

A biblical criterion to apply

Is there then any criterion other than anatomical identity to modern man, or cultural similarities, that the Christian may legitimately use to determine whether or not a certain fossil creature was human? We must remember that man was created in the image of God. Whatever else this includes, it does mean that man is a religious being, and that other animals are not. Evidence of religion ought to be the criterion for distinguishing truly human remains. Evidence of religion associated with fossil remains, as in the case of Neanderthal burials, definitely sets this creature apart as truly human. Definite evidence of religion in the cases of *Homo erectus* and *Australopithecus africanus* has not yet been found.

The analysis of the fossil evidence just made ought to bring out one point. The Christian believes that man is a special creation of God. But he will probably never be able to demonstrate that fact convincingly from the fossil record. He will not be able to show scientifically when man was first created. This conclusion may come as something of a shock or disappointment to the Christian. But perhaps such disappointment betrays too much reliance upon a human, limited method for obtaining knowledge for the corroboration of an infallible truth. We must not forget the tentative

(Continued on page 87)

Orthodox Presbyterians – 35 years old

Wilmington, Del.

—The General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church convened for an opening worship at the Emmanuel Orthodox Presbyterian Church, at 8 p.m., May 24, 1971. The denomination begins its thirty-sixth year on June 11; Emmanuel Church is celebrating its seventy-fifth anniversary this year.

The worship service was conducted by the Rev. John J. Mitchell, moderator of the 37th General Assembly. The assembly began its business sessions the next morning with the calling of the roll; at its maximum, there were over 140 commissioners present. The assembly reelected Mr. Edward A. Haug as statistician; chose Mr. Richard A. Barker as stated clerk, and the Rev. Robert E. Nicholas as assistant clerk. Dr. George W. Knight III of Covenant Seminary in St. Louis was elected the new moderator. In an often difficult assembly, he guided business with a firm but congenial hand.

In the report that follows only the highlights are given, in an attempt to present a picture of the business of the assembly.

THE CHURCH'S MISSIONS

The church's major outreach agencies traditionally report first. In general, contributions for mission causes were significantly over the previous year.

Christian Education

The Committee on Christian Education reported major increases in its staff as it sought to complete development and production of a twelve-year Sunday school curriculum. In September 1971 the first course for the Junior department will appear, the first time that the materials have been available to all departments.

In 1970, the committee reached an agreement with the Board of Publications of the Christian Reformed Church to publish jointly some of the existing Orthodox Presbyterian materials. It is also possible that the two churches, plus other Reformed groups, may be able to prepare and publish additional materials in a cooperative effort.

On the one hand, such joint efforts do serve to reduce costs for all. Yet there are problems to be overcome in such cooperative work. Whether they can be surmounted remains to be seen; but a wise stewardship of funds and talents demands that the effort be made.

Costs for the development of a Sunday school program have been huge, particularly for so small a body as the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. Even with possible economies through joint publication, the committee had asked for a 49% increase in its budget for 1972 to a total of \$140,000 (compared with \$94,000 in 1971). The Stewardship Committee (with the responsibility to present a Combined Budget for all three major standing committees) felt it could not ask the other committees to reduce their budgets in order to meet this unusual demand. It did approve an amount

of \$100,000 with the provision that the additional \$40,000 would be given from undesignated funds *if* the budgets of all three committees were met and *if* there was that much extra.

With so substantial a progress in reaching its goal for Sunday school materials, the committee can only urge the church to respond and to meet the opportunity to minister to thousands of young people in many different churches.

Home Missions

Basically, the church's home missions program has been frozen at existing levels due to limited funds and rising costs. The Committee on Home Missions and Church Extension does expect to provide partial support for a missionary-at-large in New England. It has also upgraded salary scales for missionaries.

The most challenging new policy announced by the committee was its new schedule of aid for beginning home mission fields. Any new home mission field must have at least ten wage-earners to qualify for aid. And aid will be granted, on a diminishing scale, for a maximum of six years (compared with ten under the old schedule). Much care and hard work will be required of any group receiving home mission aid!

The committee also made a tentative report on a possible internship program for prospective pastors. Though the committee favors the idea, it had several questions concerning the details and financing of such a program. Another year was given in which to work it out.

Foreign Missions

The general view for foreign missions is also one of some improvement in contributions largely offset by increased costs. The Committee on Foreign Missions is faced with a need for extra funds for the education of missionaries' children.

Most crucial, however, is the urgent need to recruit and finance the sending of replacements to the fields. One missionary family has retired; three others have or soon will leave the field for various personal reasons. There are





no missionaries under appointment, ready to go, even if funds were available.

Discussion of the committee's report showed concern in several areas. Fear was expressed that the hospital in Ethiopia might be draining funds needed for strictly evangelistic work. Lack of successful recruitment was noted; but as the report emphasized, this remains very much a concern for local churches in the training of their young people.

Part of the lack of volunteers for foreign service may be the increasing evidence that "Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria" are in urgent need of the gospel as well as the "uttermost parts." This is a subject well worth further thought and discussion.

A feeling that communication between the committee and local churches was far from ideal also came to expression. And no doubt this too is a subject that should be considered thoughtfully.

General Benevolence

The work of the Committee on General Benevolence, once largely a matter of aid to retired or incapacitated ministers, has suddenly become a major item on the assembly's docket. Last year the committee was instructed to "examine ways of expanding its diaconal ministry . . . in order to reach out to the needs of the poor and distressed in the church and the world."

The committee had done this, eliciting suggestions from the presbyteries. As a result, it proposed two new items in its budget. The first called for a \$5000 "Work-Scholarship" fund so that poor children in South Philadelphia might attend an inner-city Christian school. The second sought a \$10,000 "seed-fund" looking ahead to setting up a "Half-



Moderator of the 38th General Assembly: George W. Knight III, Th.D.

way House" (also in Philadelphia) for drug addicts or alcoholics.

Though last year's assembly had specifically mentioned a ministry "in the church *and* the world," many commissioners hesitated now to approve the use of deacons' funds for those outside the "household of faith." Should the church not take care of its own first of all?

Yet the assembly did approve the Work-Scholarship concept, but deleted the Halfway House, suggesting that the Committee on Home Missions might consider an evangelistic endeavor to addicts instead. Finally, the vagueness of "General Benevolence" was noted and the committee was asked to suggest a new name for itself.

THE DEBATED ISSUES

Besides those debates, some quite involved, that arose in connection with the reports of various standing committees, there were two major debates that took a large portion of the assembly's time.

The Abortion Question

At last year's assembly, an overture had urged the assembly to warn against abortions—except to save the life of the mother—and to encourage members to speak out against the practice and in regard to "liberalized" abortion laws. The overture lacked supporting biblical grounds and serious differences of opinion were expressed by commissioners last year. As a result, the matter had been referred to a committee for the supplying of biblical grounds.

The committee's report, ably presented by Professor John M. Frame, was lengthy, including considerations from Scripture and science. An extended period of debate followed, but the assembly was unable to reach a conclusion. A few crucial points are noted here.



Clerks at work: Robert E. Nicholas, assistant clerk; Richard A. Barker, stated clerk.

Is a fetus a person? The committee urged the adoption of this resolution as the summing up of its study: "Unborn children are living creatures in the image of God, given by God as a blessing to their parents. Between conception and birth they are the objects of God's particular providence and care as they are being prepared by God for the responsibilities of postnatal life. Scripture obligates us to treat unborn children as human persons in all decisions and actions involving them. They should not, therefore, be destroyed by voluntary abortion in the absence of valid medical grounds demonstrating the necessity of such abortion to save the mother's life."

But the committee does *not* mean that a fetus is necessarily a *person*. It says, "There is *no way to demonstrate*, either from Scripture or from science or from some combination of the two, that the unborn child *is a* human person from the point of conception." Still, since a fetus is human, as much as a foot or hand, then it can be said to be in God's image.

This distinction seems confusing. To be a "living creature in the image of God" is to be a human person in the language of Genesis 1:27 and 2:7 (where "soul" is the word elsewhere translated "creature"). [The editor does not agree that Scripture fails to *prove* the personhood of a fetus. Psalm 51:5 remains a crucial text here, and we hope to discuss it in the future.]

Assume the fetus is a person? The committee believes that the biblical evidence is such that we must *assume* the fetus to be a person though we cannot prove it. And we must act accordingly, rejecting all abortion except to save a mother's life, and working to influence civil legislation to this end.

It is with this assumption of personhood that a minority report by Professor Paul Woolley takes exception. If Scripture does not *prove* the matter, it is wrong to require us to assume it. As Dr. Woolley puts it: "If God has not prohibited an action, the church must not do so."

Professor Woolley is also concerned that Christians not try to obtain the "enforcement of religious principles by state legislation," since law can never produce regenerated living. And, a legislated morality in one place can become a legislated denial of religious freedom in another place or time.

No decision is reached! The debate that followed showed some who felt the committee had gone beyond what Scripture taught and others who felt it had not gone as far as Scripture does. But the debate did not seem to be approaching any conclusion.

Finally, it was determined to print the report, urge everyone to study it and the whole subject, and encourage presbyteries to report the results with "their findings or recommendations for advice to be given to the churches by the [next] General Assembly." That finished the debate for this year—and set the stage for its renewal next time!

It is easy to feel discouraged about this, especially when your own mind is made up! Perhaps it was wise to postpone it this way rather than to do what might be contrary to God's will. And yet—if a fetus is a person, if some mother or doctor might have been dissuaded from an abortion, if a life might have been saved—no one should come to the next assembly without a thorough study of this urgent question!

Race Relations

The Reformed Ecumenical Synod had called on its member churches to hold regional conferences on race relations and to "test conditions" in the churches on the matter. Last year's assembly authorized two representatives to plan such a conference; this was held in Chicago on March 2-5, 1971 (and is reported on in the March issue of the *Guardian*).

Most of those who attended the conference were far more interested in "social action" proposals to relieve the plight of the distressed than in evangelistic concern for their eternal welfare. The conference did *not* adopt these proposals, but simply catalogued them and referred them to the churches "for their use."

The two Orthodox Presbyterian representatives recommended that all but two of these proposals be referred to various church agencies "for their use." The proposals urged designating for "the ministry of mercy" an amount equal to that needed for "the ministry of the Word"; urged re-oriented missions planning to commit more money to meeting the needs of the poor; suggested a wide variety of educational efforts, to enlighten church members to social injustices, to provide special materials for minority groups; and urged churches to become involved in combatting such social problems as discrimination in housing.

The assembly was not inclined to adopt such proposals, and did not. Actually, concern about race relations in the Reformed Ecumenical Synod was initiated by the Orthodox Presbyterian Church over fifteen years ago. But the concern was with enforced segregation or "apartheid" and similar restrictive attitudes in the churches. Scripture calls us to preach to all men and to welcome all kinds of believers into the fellowship of the saints. It was sad to see this biblical concern finally result in a hodge-podge of social do-goodism in Chicago.

The assembly did recognize the need to speak a clearer word on this subject. It appointed a committee to draw up proposals for "meeting the problems of race, based upon plain and consistent biblical principles." (Messrs. Jay E. Adams, Lloyd Burghart, Lawrence R. Eyres, Robert D. Knudsen, James C. Petty, and Edwin C. Urban were elected).

ECUMENICAL RELATIONS

Relations and considerations of possible merger with other churches have usually taken much time in recent years. It took less this year, partly because little progress had been made. Some aspects of these relations are noted here.

Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod

Though both the OPC and the RPC/ES are committed to working toward a possible union, there were no meetings held during the past year. Last year's assembly had authorized setting up a joint committee to study "the church's responsibility in defining ethical applications of the Word of God." Representatives have been appointed by both churches, but no meeting has yet been held.

The Fraternal Relations Committee of the RPC/ES has urged that the OP General Assembly consider a statement on the Christian life, drawn up by men from both churches and included in the proposed Basis of Union. Similar

action was urged in an overture from the Presbytery of the Northwest. The assembly declined, however, and referred the statement back to its Committee on Ecumenicity and Interchurch Relations. (This failure to act is questioned in a letter to the editor in this issue of the *Guardian*.)

Prospects of merger with the RPC/ES seem dimmer than two or three years ago. But that may be good, if it means we are jointly seeking a more biblical understanding of the church's proper work before reciting any marriage vows. Certainly the question of whether churches should issue resolutions on ethical matters is one area that should be clarified.

Christian Reformed Church

While the Committee on Christian Education seems to have found a cordial and cooperative arrangement with the Board of Publications of the Christian Reformed Church, representatives from both churches discussing a possible merger have run into difficulties.

The major area of concern is in the doctrine of Scripture. Certain statements by Christian Reformed speakers appear to show a new approach to Scripture that differs from the historical Reformed position. I say "appear," since the Christian Reformed representatives insist that some of these statements have been misinterpreted and that the new approach is not really out of harmony with the traditional position. (A report on one aspect of this is found in the May issue of the *Guardian* under "A new approach to biblical authority." The area of divergence has to do with *interpreting* Scripture; but that will affect one's view of the Bible itself.)

The Committee to Confer with Representatives of the Christian Reformed Church recommended that a letter be sent to the CR Synod noting the fact of difficulties and urging that discussions be continued in a search for true unity of faith. The assembly agreed to send the letter.

De Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland

In 1969, the general assembly decided to inform the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands of its intention to break off the "sister-church relationship." (This calls for each church to accept the other's members in full standing, and amounts to full intercommunion—a relation much closer, for example, than that with the Reformed Presbyterian Church.)

The Synod of the Gereformeerde Kerken requested us to give reasons for this step. The Committee on Ecumenicity was authorized to state these in a letter and did so; it noted various developments in the Dutch church, including its

S. G. Parker photo



membership in the World Council of Churches, its decision to ordain women as elders, its rescinding of an earlier decision that had declared the historicity of Genesis 2 and 3 to be confessionally binding, and the existence of questions in that church concerning "the scope and nature of [Scripture's] authority."

In effect, the Gereformeerde Kerken are being asked to explain or modify the positions noted above. If that is unsatisfactory, presumably a future assembly will complete the severing of the sister relationship.

Reformed Ecumenical Synod

These developments in the Gereformeerde Kerken also led to the assembly's addressing a letter to the RES asking that body to decide whether the Dutch church is true to its confession and thus rightly a member of the RES. (This move could well cause the breaking up of the RES, or result in a new alignment of those churches still committed to the historic Reformed faith and the infallible, inerrant Scriptures.)

The question of "the nature and extent of biblical authority" has been docketed for a full day's discussion at the upcoming meeting of the RES in Australia next year (but *no* representative of the Presbyterian tradition was invited to speak on this). The assembly determined to budget the funds needed to send delegates and chose Messrs. Harvie Conn and Norman Shepherd as voting delegates; John P. Galbraith and George W. Knight III as non-voting delegates; with Richard B. Gaffin Jr., Carl J. Reitsma and Edmund P. Clowney named as alternates.

ASSEMBLY MACHINERY

Professor Frame (elsewhere in this issue) admits the necessity of machinery, but regrets the amount of time needed to "oil" it. Some of the maintenance decisions are noted here.

The Stewardship Committee

When it was set up some years ago, the Stewardship Committee was instructed to prepare a Combined Budget each year for all three of the major standing committees (both home and foreign missions and Christian education), and to "encourage the practice of biblical principles of financial stewardship in the church." It has largely succeeded in its first task, but has never managed to carry out the second.

Having been urged by last year's assembly to review all its functions and organization, the committee came with proposals this year to make possible the full discharge of its duties. These proposals were quite far-reaching, but it was the proposal to hire a staff for its work that drew the most attention.

Perhaps it was the cost, or the inherent dangers of a fiscal "bishop," or simply a disinclination to enlarge the church's "bureaucracy." The assembly balked at the proposal, defeated the plan, and then went on to remove the committee's obligation to foster good stewardship.

What is left is not a Stewardship Committee, but a combiner of budgets. The church has no organized way of promoting stewardship, and no adequate board of review to judge the priorities of its various mission programs.

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The Presbyterian Guardian

EDITOR

JOHN J. MITCHELL

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Letters to the Editor Out of Concern . . .

Dear Mr. Mitchell,

I was grateful to note your discussion of *Out of Concern for the Church* in the March issue of the *Guardian*.

There are a few misunderstandings of our position in your review that a brief letter cannot possibly eliminate. These are doubtless a result of the fact that *Concern* was not a planned book, but a collection of available speeches on a similar theme.

We are concerned, in the first place, to find out again what it means in our time that the life we now live in the flesh must be a life of faith in the Son of God (Gal. 1:20). Further, we are trying to understand the *communal* character of the Body of Christ in a time when the People of God are tragically fragmented. When we use the word "communal" in this sense—descriptive of Christ's Body, the spiritual community of all those whose hearts have been opened by the Spirit and who are *united* with Christ in His death and resurrection (Rom. 6:5) and are therefore members one of another (Eph. 4:25; 1 Cor. 12:27; Rom. 12:5; 1 Pet. 2:5, 9, 10)—we are not concerned with "organizations" and "institutions."

Questions about Christian institutions and organizations arise in the context of the path of God's People through history. In a free society voluntary associations may well be a meaningful instrument to raise a witness for our common Master in various

cultural areas. Our main concern is that our life in this world be a witness for our Savior and Lord. That concern has today often been limited to our life in the institutional churches and in our homes. We desire to go beyond that. And in going beyond it, we feel that both the individual and the organizational avenues are significant—the organizational when a team of *many* persons is required to do *one* job.

I sincerely hope that there will soon be an opportunity to converse with you about these and related matters. We must not lose one another in the reformed-presbyterian community in North America; there are so many things we could do more effectively if we worked together.

Bernard Zylstra
Toronto, Canada

Thank you, Dr. Zylstra, for this gracious response. We have received several other letters, but space limits our ability to reproduce them all now. I agree that we should continue to discuss these vitally important matters, and to work together if that is possible.

In order to carry on the "dialog," the *Guardian* will publish another letter on the subject, written by Robert Lee Carvill, Director of Communications for the A.A.C.S. in Toronto. In it he focuses on certain basic concerns in a way that should help clarify the discussion.

There have circulated various reports from time to time that representatives of the Institute for Christian Studies in Toronto, or their supporters elsewhere, have been less than charitable toward those who differ with them. I have received several letters on this subject, and in all of them a warm and open Christian attitude is plainly apparent.

—J. J. M.

"Why total abstinence"!

Dear Mr. Mitchell:

What a pity for Mr. Keller to take so much effort and time, and become so defensive, about the worn-out arguments presented thirty years ago in our church. I would like to see equal space given to the side of "Why Total Abstinence."

It puzzles me that Christians who have the very best in Christ should need alcohol. Surely there can't be that many bad stomachs among Orthodox Presbyterians! Undoubtedly the euphoria produced is one factor for promoting its use. Could a feeling of I-want-to-assert-my-rights-and-you-can't-stop-me be involved? A truly sophisticated and confident personality finds it quite simple to be comfortable with himself and in the presence of anyone, and does not need to take something to affect his brain or create a feeling of well being without basis in reality. A thoughtful host does not put his guest on the spot by offering alcohol if he knows the guest does not normally drink. And the socially mature guest knows how to refuse without giving offense.

Since "no man lives unto himself," the thrust of a two-page article indicating that a *non-drinker* has a "weak conscience on this matter" and that the drinker must not have his rights abridged, smacks heavily of the current self-centered adolescent and his attitude toward "the Establishment." Perhaps our youth will be quite delighted to discover a right they weren't particularly conscious of. We grant that a little wine is not sin; but given the right setting, . . . it can sweep away the inhibitions and defenses against sin. Are we trying to see how far we can go and still not sin? Let's grow up!

Mr. Keller (and others) may exercise his rights freely without reproach from me, or damage to my personality. But I question the good (?) effect it may have on the generation twice removed from me. It was commendable to have some mention of the responsibility one should have for a brother; but the emphasis would have been stronger had it been reversed. Does someone plan to prepare an equally learned article showing the Bible's defense of the use of tobacco in spite of medical findings today? "Methinks thou dost protest too loudly."

Florence Partington
Gloucester, Mass.

In response to the direct question: There are no plans for an article on "Why Total Abstinence," though I am willing to consider it.

Several letters were received on this subject. Some of them were rather in-

sistent that their contents be printed. Though I fear it may offend some Christian brother, let me explain: 1. The *Guardian* does not have the resources for printing everything received.

2. The *Guardian* does not intend to present every "side" of every question. That sounds blunt. But the *Guardian* simply is *not* a forum for all opinions, even for all opinions in the church. It is a journal setting forth Scripture's teachings as these are summarized in the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms. But the *Guardian* is perfectly willing to consider publishing any article, no matter how far it differs from the editor's opinion, *if* that article is a reasonable attempt to understand Scripture's teaching on any subject.

Mr. Keller's article was published not to promote the use of alcohol, but to remind us all that Christ's church (and her individual members!) has no right to judge or legislate morals where her Lord has not done so in the Word. If Mr. Keller has misread that Word, then show him and us where and how he did so. The *Guardian* is more than willing to consider any such rebuttal.

—J. J. M.

Why not speak out?

Dear Mr. Mitchell,

I am concerned. Having graduated from Westminster Seminary, and having begun the steps toward licensure in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, you can appreciate my love for the Reformed testimony of that church. In God's providence, however, I am now an assistant pastor in a Reformed Presbyterian Church.

I was the only Reformed Presbyterian who sat in on as many as four different sessions of the General Assembly held in Wilmington, and was thankful for the warm Christian spirit shown me. But I was greatly troubled by the assembly's refusal to adopt the overture from the Presbytery of the Northwest that urged approval of a statement on holy living that was drawn up by men from both the Reformed and Orthodox Presbyterian Churches.

Discussion at the assembly revealed no one who felt that this statement contradicted the Bible's mandate for

holy living. At a time when some Presbyterian churches denounce biblical guidelines for holy living, why does the General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church hold back from approving a statement that *is* biblical?

Apparently, some commissioners felt the statement was not complete. But that is also true of Chapter XX of the Westminster Confession of Faith. Some questioned any attempt to go beyond the confession. But I would suggest that Acts 15 is the answer. Here the council considered an issue brought before them. They were not passing resolutions just to pass resolutions. They were dealing with a serious problem that called for some answer to show the joint witness of the Christian church.

The overture reflects a similar situation. A local church in the presbytery, a mission work, is seeking to make its testimony clear; it has a problem in regard to this *and* their denomination's position on Christian liberty. They appealed to the presbytery, which in turn appealed to the General Assembly. Both the local church and the presbytery were looking for help, and in a real sense this was ignored when the overture was referred to a committee.

This committee is to report back to the next general assembly. But what more can they say? The assembly has already debated the issue and made it quite clear that it does not want to pass such a statement. So, what should the committee report? Further, and this is the real paradox! the committee to which the overture was referred is the same committee [the Committee on Ecumenicity and Interchurch Relations] that accepted the statement in question in conversations with the corresponding committee of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod.

In a time of question and doubt on moral issues, particularly in Presbyterian churches; in a day when a presbytery was looking for a sound statement on holy living; and at an hour when we need to let our denominational testimony ring forth for Christ as loudly as possible, I do not see the logic of the Assembly's refusal to pass this overture. I am concerned.

William G. Phillips
Faith R. P. Church,
Wilmington, Del.



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General Assembly— the morning after

This was my first general assembly—my church's thirty-eight. I sincerely hope it will not be my last. Yet if this one was typical in certain respects, I may not attend many more of them.

Here's my gripe: It seems to me that about 85% of the time at this general assembly was spent "oiling machinery" and only about 15% in substantive discussion of the application of God's Word to the needs of our time. Further, it seems to me that some commissioners—at times the majority—begrudged themselves even that 15%. They seemed to want even less substantive discussion in order to have more time to oil the machinery!

These figures of 85% and 15% aren't particularly important, nor are they statistically worked out. They represent my feeling, I confess; but it is a feeling I think others share.

Machinery oiling

Under this heading I would include: most committee reports, most committee elections, most discussions about allocation of funds, most procedural motions, most parliamentary questions, most discussions of presbytery minutes, most discussions of the docket. I say "most" not "all" in these cases because rarely such discussions did concern biblical principles rather than questions of expediency. I would also include *all* discussions of travel funds, of date and place of the next assembly, of whose turn it was to speak and who may have the privilege of the floor.

Under "substantive discussion of scriptural principle" I would include such matters as the debate concerning the nature of the church's diaconal ministry, the questions concerning abortion, the theological integrity of the Reformed Ecumenical Synod, the implications of scriptural ecumenism, and so forth.

Now I don't want to say that machinery should *not* be oiled. Nor do I necessarily feel that there should be less machinery. I'm glad that the assembly provides as many services to the church as it does through its committees. As for *Robert's Rules of Order*—well, I do feel that they unnecessarily inhibit genuine, timely expression of

JOHN M. FRAME

real concern, and that they unnecessarily encourage parliamentary nit-picking. Still, they are better than no rules at all. They should be enforced until something better can be devised in the interest of "decency and order."

Priorities, and urgencies

Someone will say at this point, "The machinery *must* be oiled; this is urgent!" After all, the term of Mr. A does expire this year. An election must be held at this assembly to fill the vacancy. The question of abortion, for example, does not have to be answered *now*. If we're pressed for time, we can postpone the latter in order to do the former. This sort of argument can be used to defend the priority of machinery oiling over substantive scriptural discussion. In my view, however, such an argument is specious and myopic.

The matter of abortion (Why do I keep returning to that example?) is urgent. Unborn children are being killed off in unprecedented numbers with the approval of civil governments and the encouragement of fashionable "experts" on ethics. Laws are in flux; some states are on the verge of liberalizing abortion laws and others that did liberalize theirs are now considering modifications. The question is in the public mind as never before, and it may never capture public attention in this way again.

Had our church taken a stand on this issue, or at least discussed it more thoroughly, we might have attained a clarity on the subject that would have enabled us to be effective instruments of God at this crucial time. Somewhere a legislator might have been persuaded (New York's law was passed by a majority of one), somewhere a law changed, somewhere questions of life and death resolved for thousands of unborn persons. Does not the question of abortion have an *urgency* about it—at least as much urgency to filling Mr. A's place on the committee?

Of course, if the assembly postponed the abortion question because it was uncertain about the scriptural teaching, then the postponement cannot be faulted. I think myself that the

biblical arguments on the basic issue are simple and clear. [See the report on abortion elsewhere in this issue.] But if, as I suspect, the debate was cut off in part just to have time for "more important business," then I think the assembly was most unwise.

Examples of church assemblies

Think back to the great assemblies of the past. Let's start with Acts 15. Were Paul and Barnabas given travel reimbursement for mileage from Antioch to Jerusalem? Who paid them? Did they have a travel fund committee? What rules of debate were followed? Did some committee make a preliminary study of the questions at issue? Who knows? Luke does not tell us.

What Luke does relate is the *substantive discussion* and the *decision* made as a result. The discussion, furthermore, turned on the force of God's revelation—the apostolic injunction of Peter and its Old Testament anticipation in Amos 9:11, 12. And that is what we remember about the Jerusalem council.

Think too about Nicea, Constantinople, Chalcedon, Orange, Dordt, and Westminster. Did they have stated clerks? Did they have recesses for coffee? (Did they even have coffee then?) Did they formally adopt a docket? Being a theologian and not a church historian, I do not know. And I don't really care enough to look it all up. But I care very much (and I think every Christian should care) about the substantive discussions on scriptural matters conducted at these councils. All of these have influenced the thinking of the church for hundreds of years.

Structure for decisions

Who was the moderator of the third general assembly of the Presbyterian Church of America? Off hand, I do not know. Maybe some of you do. But what I do know is the *statement* on Christian liberty made at that assembly, a *statement* that came up again this year in one of those rare substantive discussions. That is a *statement* I will not forget, one to which I expect to refer frequently.

If Acts 15 is to be our model, the *primary* purpose of assemblies should be to engage in concentrated, corporate study of God's Word in order to determine its demands with respect to

those questions on which sessions and presbyteries need help. Actually, the whole committee structure grows out of this primary concern as a way of expediting such decision-making. But when the machinery's demands force curtailment of debate on substantive issues, leading to endless postponements of urgent concerns, then the structure must be challenged.

Do we need a longer assembly? Perhaps. But what if the machinery continues to proliferate? At some point, I contend, it must be challenged. On some future docket I would like to see budgetary items placed *last*. Then the pressures of everybody-wanting-to-go-home will fall on those discussions rather than upon others. This is an example of what could be done mechanically to help the situation.

Essentially, however, the problem is personal. Each commissioner must ask himself questions like these: Even if my parliamentary point is valid, is it important? Is it so crucial as to call for

an hour-long parliamentary hassle? Or, will it help us get on to more substantive matters? Not every true and valid point needs to be made; many true and valid points are better left unsaid.

A matter of emphasis

I trust that these remarks, coming from a young and inexperienced commissioner, will not seem too presumptuous. Take them as questions addressed by youth to those of more experience. Perhaps my very inexperience will contribute to a fresh perspective, so that these comments will serve for edifying. This is not the sort of thing about which to file a formal protest, since it is a matter of emphasis and priorities. A new system of priorities cannot be decreed by motion. Rather, our emphasis will be changed when we apply the Word of God to our hearts.

I think I have a healthy interest in the committees, finances, the "machinery" of our church. But I have little financial skill, less administrative tal-

ent, and almost total parliamentary ineptitude. My calling is to be a student and teacher of theology. Perhaps that is why I'm far more interested in theological issues than administrative ones. And perhaps these facts limit the general validity of my remarks, though I think not. In any case, if this general assembly was typical of such assemblies in our church, then they have little need for what gifts I do possess. They can probably carry on their business more effectively without my participation. In that case, I can probably make a better stewardship of my time, and a greater contribution to the church, by staying home to do what God has given me the ability to do.

But—if we are going to search God's Word at these assemblies, waiting prayerfully upon the Lord, addressing ourselves boldly and forth-rightly to the great spiritual needs of the present day—well, would you have stayed home during the Westminster Assembly?

Whence man?

(Continued from page 79)

nature of much of science. If we expect to demonstrate biblical truth scientifically, we have put too much faith in science and have failed to understand its nature and methods.

That the Christian cannot demonstrate from scientific data when man was created is a conclusion that needs to be supported. Setting a date for the creation of man implies an ability to say that fossil remains, of *Australopithecus* for example, were or were not genuinely human. If we assume this creature was not human and that, instead, the human drama begins with *Homo erectus*, we encounter problems. Future discoveries may uncover remains of *Homo erectus* still older than those presently known. This would mean that man was created earlier than we thought.

On the other hand, some form may be found that is transitional between *Australopithecus* and *Homo erectus*. We might conclude that the transitional form was a man-like extinct ape. But again, how could we ever demonstrate that fact convincingly?

New discoveries upset old theory

New discoveries at any time can upset a scientific theory of creation. One of our difficulties is that we simply do not know how much biological-cultural change man is and was capable of through time. We do not know what Adam looked like. We are thus on very unsure footing if we presume to state dogmatically that such-and-such a fossil was human and that another was not when dealing with the older, more primitive remains.

The Christian scientist is, in effect, in a bind. He knows from Scripture that man was specially created and did not evolve from animals. On the one hand he may be able to bring forth many scientific evidences that cast serious doubt on the evolutionary theory. And, let us get on with this in a

serious fashion!

On the other hand, there is the very strong probability that the special creation of man can never be "demonstrated" with any measure of scientific validity. One theory of the time of creation and of the particular type of fossil man first created must inevitably be replaced over and over again by new theories as new evidence comes to light.

As with the creation of the material of the universe at the beginning, we understand "through faith" that Adam was created by God. Just as we can never demonstrate scientifically when the universe was first called into being, because new facts are continually coming to light, so also we can never really demonstrate when Adam was created. This conclusion should help us to see in a striking way that scientific and historical evidences should be used cautiously in attempting to bring a person to accept the reliability of Scripture as the Word of God. It is really only the Spirit and the Word itself, not scientific and historical validation, that in the last analysis will convince anyone of the infallibility and authority of Scripture—on the origin of man, or on the destiny of man, or on any other point to which the Scripture speaks.

We appreciate the time and effort of Dr. Young in preparing this series of articles on man's origin. No doubt some readers will question some of his conclusions; but keep in mind Dr. Young's own emphasis on the tentative character of many scientific theories. The question is, What does the Scripture teach, and where does it remain silent?

Dr. Young's challenge to those holding some form of "theistic evolution" to exegete certain Scripture passages has been heard. We have an offer from a competent scientist to answer these challenges. In the months ahead we hope to publish these responses and continue the discussion on these vitally important matters. —J. J. M.

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38th General Assembly Report

(Continued from page 83)

The Stated Clerk

Over the years, the work of the stated clerk (preparing and printing the assembly's minutes, doing all its correspondence, keeping the records, and many other tasks) has grown beyond what a man can do in his "spare time."

The assembly was convinced of the need to make better provision for this and authorized the Trustees of the General Assembly to work out, in consultation with the clerk, the amount of time needed and a fair remuneration for it. They are also responsible for recommending someone for the position on a part-time basis to next year's assembly.

Ruling elder Richard A. Barker of Westfield, New Jersey, was able to assume the duties this year. Whether the Trustees can find someone again next year is yet to be seen!

Next year's date and place

In the most frustrating debate of the assembly (since no one won!), the question of when and where to meet next year was thoroughly disputed. The Committee on Date, Place and Travel had recommended convening on June 19, 1972 at Bethel Church, Wheaton, Illinois. Five other invitations had also been extended.

Finally the assembly determined to meet on May 15 in the Philadelphia area (to which it had *no* invitation!), asking the three suburban churches there to act as hosts. Recognizing that this might not be acceptable, the assembly authorized the moderator and stated clerk to set another date and place if necessary.

Miscellaneous items

A proposal for a *limited assembly* had been sent to the presbyteries last year. It would have amended the Form of Government to permit a representative assembly. But too few of the presbyteries acted on it for it to be adopted. It was sent down again for another try.

A complaint against a presbytery for failing to instruct a local session to consider a *minister's request for local church membership* was denied by the assembly. Though

many commissioners were sympathetic to the plea, they were apparently convinced that the present Form of Government forbids dual membership. (See Norman Shepherd's article on "Which church does Dr. Van Til belong to?" in the *May Guardian*.)

The *Sabbath Question* failed to come before the assembly, since the committee (though it had prepared its report) felt that further development of its position was necessary in order to meet minority objections. The Committee on Sabbath Matters was also handed an overture from the Presbytery of Southern California that asked whether the second ordination vow requires the acceptance of the Confession's teaching of the Sabbath. The committee's report was delayed until next year.

Revisions to the "Black Book" are proceeding, with two committees reporting progress. Within two years, it seems likely that the assembly will have to act on proposed revisions both to the Form of Government and the Book of Discipline. (Work on the Directory for Worship has also begun.) The *Guardian* hopes to present reviews of some of the more significant proposals in future issues.

The question of whether there should be an *official church paper* was referred to a committee by last year's assembly. This committee found itself rather evenly divided as to whether biblical principles require a church paper. Its report presented both views. The committee was continued in order to determine what a church paper should be and whether one is presently feasible. (*The Presbyterian Guardian* is not an official organ, but is published by an independent corporation.)

Elections to Committees again showed a trend toward "new blood." Among the new names were: Messrs. William Krispin, Robert Ashlock and John Bettler to Christian Education; Messrs. Larry Conard, Luder Whitlock and Wendell Rockey to Home Missions; Herbert Bird and Bernard Stonehouse to Foreign Missions; and John Kinnaird to General Benevolence. That ought to keep things moving!

Last thoughts

As Professor Frame notes in his morning-after complaint, it is distressing to see a general assembly fail to come to a conclusion on an important question. Perhaps such failures are unavoidable in a church whose uncompromising stand for the Scriptures and the Reformed faith demands a certain "rugged individualism" of its members.

But perhaps too there are better ways of trying to bring an assembly to a focus and decision on debated issues. Among commissioners to this year's assembly were several who wonder if we cannot improve the machinery for decision-making. We think it is worth considering, and we welcome contributions to a discussion of how to improve the conduct of a general assembly's discussions.

—J. J. M.

The Presbyterian Guardian

Business could be serious!

