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Editorial

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Editorial

In the United States for the last decade, we have witnessed the appearance of the "Religious Right." President Jimmy Carter was an unashamed, evangelical Baptist, and during his time in office, "born-again" became a household word. Since then the term has lost some of its particular conversionistic flavor but Fundamentalists like the Rev. Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson have continued to associate their gospel with events political.

Each of the three feature articles in this issue of *Pro Rege* deals with an aspect of this new influence of Evangelical (or Fundamentalist) Christianity on public life. Russell Maatman, Professor of Chemistry and a member of the Editorial Board of *Pro Rege*, begins a series dealing with the question of origins. Earlier in this century what we now call the media focused their attention on the Scopes Trial. Fundamentalist Christianity, according to the press, lost that battle and Darwinism became firmly established. But history seemed to repeat itself in a trial a couple of years ago in Arkansas. Again Evangelical Christianity took on the Evolutionists. This time the Evangelicals had their own scientific society to testify for them: The Creation Research Society. But like William Jennings Bryan in the earlier case, the Creation spokesmen proved no match for the opposition.

Maatman would have us ponder whether Evangelical Christians have been fighting the wrong battles. Is it necessary for Evangelicals to believe in a "young Earth" in order to belong to the circle of the orthodox? What are the legitimate boundaries of theology and science?

Rockne McCarthy, Professor of Political Science and Director of the Studies Institute at Dordt College, writes about Christian schools. Not surprisingly, he is for them. But McCarthy indicates that one must not consider these schools *private* when they serve as substitutes for the schools generally considered *public*. This is a necessary corrective to the view held by many Fundamentalist Christians. They have been capturing a lot of media attention as many Christian schools resist efforts to comply with state regula-

tions. Claiming that their schools are in effect, an extension of their churches, these Christian School spokespersons claim they are due the protection of the Church-and-State Wall.

One part of the Religious Right encroaches into the territory usually considered the property of Calvinists. These are the Reconstructionists or, as some know them, the advocates of theonomy. This position, held by Rousas J. Rushdonny, economist Gary North, and theologian Greg L. Bahnsen, et al., holds that society must be restructured according to the laws of the Old Testament. Only when we apply these laws to society as well as to the church will the kingdom come. (Not without cause are these individuals Post-millennialists: they believe that through the reconstruction of society according to God's law, or through theonomy (*theos*, God; *nomos*, law), God's kingdom (the millenium) will come. The new element in this scheme is that the law that one has in mind is not the Ten Commandments alone, but all the *case* laws as well.

L. John Van Til, a new contributor to these pages, addresses one aspect of the claims of the theonomists: that John Calvin held a similar view. Historian Van Til finds no support in Calvin's writings for such a claim. (Professor Van Til is not to be confused with his uncle, Nick Van Til. The latter is the Van Til who has frequently appeared in print here. Philosopher/theologian *Cornelius* Van Til is, in turn, the uncle of Nick Van Til.)

Readers will not find an Incidentally section in this issue. Indeed, it has been missing a few times. Events reported in Incidentally have already been reported in another publication most *Pro Rege* readers see: the Dordt College *Voice*. Many significant speeches presented by the faculty or visitors eventually appear on *Pro Rege's* pages. So Incidentally has been laid to rest. Dr. James Koldenhoven, who created "For the Record, Incidentally" in the first year of *Pro Rege* and who has been its overseer since then, has done us a great service and we thank him.

John M. Zinkand