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# Christian Worldview and a View of Science: The Evolution Debate\*

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Every time I teach American colonial history I am impressed with the vision and commitment of the Puritans who emigrated to New England in the seventeenth century. Men and women, young and old, were committed to Christ and His Lordship over all of life.

The New England Puritans wanted to witness to the world what Christ was doing in their midst. Their purpose was nothing less than to establish a biblical way of life and Christian institutions in the new world.

The Puritan commitment to Christ's Lordship in education was manifest in the founding of Harvard College in 1636. A rule at the college stated that "every student be plainly instructed, and earnestly pressed to consider well, [that] the main end of life and studies is to know God and Jesus Christ which is eternal life, John 17:3, and therefore to lay Christ in the bottom, as the only foundation of all sound

knowledge and learning."

"To lay Christ in the bottom" was the educational goal of Harvard College. The Puritans often quoted Paul's injunction, in I Corinthians 2, that Christians were to possess "the mind of Christ." And yet it soon became evident that their educational aims were not succeeding. The Puritans' devotion to Christ did not significantly reform the academic disciplines. As the noted American sociologist Will Herberg has pointed out, "Nothing is more striking than the fact that, whereas the purpose of Puritan education was Christian, its philosophy and psychology were humanistic, harking back to Athens rather than Jerusalem." In not too many years, Harvard College lost its Christian identity.

As a Christian academic community today, Dordt College is faced with the same challenge the Puritans faced. We must progress from confessing that Jesus Christ is Lord over all of life to under-

\*From the introduction to the conference, "Christian Worldview and a View of Science: The Evolution Debate," held at Dordt College September 27-28, 1988. The articles and responses in this issue are based on the papers of the conference.

standing more fully the “mind of Christ” (I Corinthians 2) in every discipline, in every field of knowledge, in every aspect of college life.

In time history will judge, as it already has the Puritans, how successful we are in this task. The challenge is a formidable one. Paul reminds us in Philippians 2 that we must work out our salvation in fear and trembling. We will not have acted faithfully if, as an institution or as individual scholars, we fail to understand how Christian insight can shape and direct scientific investigation, or if we are too timid to take up the challenge to address the major issues of our day.

For these reasons Dordt College must address the controversial topic of evolution. We are thus gathered as an academic community, as friends and colleagues, to discern “the mind of Christ” in order to understand better a “Christian Worldview and a View of Science: The Evolution Debate.”

Together, we must stand beneath the Gospel, not with the Gospel in one hand and our history, literature, and science books in the other hand, as did the seventeenth century Puritans. We must stand together under the Gospel, wearing biblical glasses as we discern the spirits of our age, and claim all areas of life for Christ.