

TWENTY THESES ON NATURE AND MIRACLE

J H Diemer

Including a report of the lecture given on this subject and following discussion, held on 20 May 1944 in Utrecht. “20 Stellingen over Natuur en Wonder. *Orgaan van de Chr. Vereen. van Natuur- en Geneeskundigen in Nederland*, 43 (1945) pp. 10-23.

1. By “nature” we mean a reality of experience which in its religious root is directed to the supertemporal, in which all subjective events function in an unbreakable correlation with the constant Divine creation order and which includes not only material, biotic and psychic occurrences, but also the human spiritual life with its different aspects.

2. By “miracle” we mean the revelation of God in Jesus Christ, out of whom all things have come into being, by whom all things are sustained and restored, and to whom all things are guided. Neither the ontological miracles nor the epistemological miracles can be separated from this central miracle of revelation.

3. By “ontological miracles” we mean the fundamental miracles of creation, providence and recreation, through which nature has gained its existence, is kept in existence, is freed from sin, and is carried to completion. These miracles are worked by God above the natural and above the temporal in the root of nature, and are of an absolute character. They are inscrutable to human understanding and can only be understood in the temporal order of faith.

4. By “epistemological miracles” we mean the “signs and wonders” by which the ontological miracles are revealed to mankind, just as in the latter the central miracle is revealed. These natural occurrences have a relative miraculous character, take place within cosmic time, and are carried out through the root of nature. They point to the absolute miracles from which they are not to be separated.

5. The miracle of creation is the act of God whereby He brought into being the entire temporal world-order, and everything lying hidden within it as possibilities of subjective realisation, in Adam as the religious root of nature. Each new principle of order or structure in all the kingdoms of nature is a miracle of God’s omnipotence, and cannot be derived from earlier structures.

6. The “signs and wonders” of creation are the individual forms, figures, behaviours and societal structures of the creatures, spontaneously appearing in the course of cosmic time, within their constant structures, from which they are not to be separated. The creation miracle reveals itself relatively greater in the plant kingdom than in the kingdom of non-living nature, and still greater again in the kingdom of animals. The most marvellous is the coming into being of mankind with his most highly complex physique and his manifold functions. The products of the human spirit in culture and technology also belong to these miracles.

7. The miracle of providence is the act whereby God, in His omnipotence and wisdom, has made all creatures so interdependent that the preservation of the whole is secured. Through this miracle the cosmos continues to exist (“creatio continua”).

8. The “signs and wonders” of providence are the systematic relations between the different species of creatures, which from the moment of creation are constantly maintained throughout the history of all kingdoms of nature and which stand in the service of the development and completion of the kingdom of God on earth. Here too are gradations from lowest to highest in the character of miracle. These miracles include many answers to prayer whereby under the leading of faith, certain relationships between men and the rest of nature which are hidden in the root of nature can be unlocked. The original dominion of mankind over the lower creation is apparent from these miracles.

9. The miracle of recreation is the work of God, whereby he restores human nature, which in Adam has fallen away from serving him, to its original life-root. In Jesus Christ, the new root of recreated nature, the original root with the whole creation order hidden therein is again visible, and human nature, released from sin, is again with all its functions directed to God.

10. The “signs and wonders” of re-creation are the restorations from damage, injury, illness or disintegration which can befall the creatures in all the kingdoms of nature. Once again, there are gradations here from lower to higher. To this group belong many miracles of prayer, namely, miraculous healings and deliverances, which can come about through a strong faith in order restoring powers which lie hidden within the root of nature. They restore the ordered societal relations that were broken through sin.

11. The “signs and wonders” performed by Christ and by all who are joined to him in faith community, do battle with the results of sin in nature by removing the events of nature from the powers of darkness which cause disintegration and restoring them, through the spiritual powers of the kingdom of God, to their original direction. Believers in Christ hereby serve as instruments of the grace of God.

12. The “signs and wonders” which are the result of faith in occult powers are the so-called nature or show-miracles of magic and sorcery. They abuse the creation gifts in the service of the kingdom of darkness and make mankind an instrument of sin.

13. The “signs and wonders” of creation, providence and re-creation are not brought about through a supernatural intervention of God in an independent natural occurrence, but are worked through the root of nature within the created world-order. They are possible because the common relations of the creation, which can be grasped through logical thought, can be used, within the typical structures of things, to unlock and maintain natural phenomena whose properties are relatively new compared to those of earlier phenomena.

14. These “signs and wonders” are also not directed against nature. They abrogate no laws, neither do they break them. They are directed against sin in nature and abrogate the results of sin.

15. The scholastic conception of miracle (*miraculum*) as a direct supra-natural intervention of God in a self-sufficient nature event derives from an Aristotelian view of nature which divorces the constant structural principles of things from the root of nature and hypostatizes them to a system of substantial forms, which actualise themselves in matter as the objective causes of things. The form-matter schema of classical philosophy was Christianised by Thomas and placed in service of the schema of material nature and immaterial, supernatural grace, without mis-understanding its paganistic-religious character.

16. Rationalism brings a radical criticism to bear on the supernaturalistic conceptions of miracle of Roman Catholic and Protestant scholasticism by rationally postulating the unbreakable character of mechanistic causality in nature. While supernaturalistic theories are consistently rejected in Spinoza's pantheism and in Hume's empiricism, Leibniz leaves room for it in his deistic system. He retains the terminology of scholastic miracle theory, yet interprets it wholly anew within the framework of his religious humanistic thought system of nature and freedom. Consistent deism, on the other hand, rejects any supra-naturalism and acknowledges only the miracle of the first creation.

17. Mechanistic natural philosophy (Boyle, Newton) too, because it absolutises the laws of physical nature, can provide no insight into the possibility that the general relations can be meaningfully directed through higher functions of reality. Miracle plays practically no role here anymore; it is almost totally relegated to the past and is approached theoretically from a traditional supra-naturalism, that is raised on a partly mechanistic, partly teleological substructure. This supra-naturalistic conception of miracle remains active to the present day among Christian philosophers of nature.

18. Materialistic philosophy (Buchner, Haeckel) and modern theology have carried the supra-naturalistic miracle speculation of scholasticism and rationalism to their logical conclusion and have broken with the last remnants of belief in miracles.

19. Following Schleiermacher, the newer Lutheran theology is again discussing miracles and recognising the possibility of "signs and wonders." The critical philosophy which generally accompanies this theology is once again investigating the question of the relation of nature and miracle. Due to its orientation to Kant, however, this philosophy has not been able to rise above supra-naturalism. Only Kuyper, with his radically Christian point of departure, succeeded in this.

20. The undermining of determinism in physics and of evolution in biology, together with the discoveries of experimental biology and para-psychology and the experiences of the newer medical science are gradually causing present-day science to speak once again of creating and regenerating powers, of plan and purpose and of totality, in short, of the incomprehensible miracles of life and spirit. It is the task of the Christian thinker to test these ideas on the basis of his radical-religious vision of reality and to give principial leadership to the development of science in the near future.

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At this point the following discussion developed with reference to the lecture.

Prof. Van der Horst, who could not attend the gathering, requested by way of a written note a detailed explanation of the concepts “supra-temporal” and “supra-natural,” which the speaker had used in his theses. Can you not just as well say that miracles are placed by God in the root of nature? Prof van der Horst tries to avoid such concepts as much as possible, because they so easily lead to misunderstanding.

Dr Diemer answers:- The concepts “supra-temporal” and “supra-natural” are historically heavily loaded and for this reason are indeed perhaps better avoided. He no longer used these terms in his lecture, for he believes he can do without them. They are thoroughly metaphysical terms which fit into humanistic and Thomistic systems of philosophy, but which easily cause confusion in a system of Christian Scriptural philosophy. From a Scriptural standpoint God is both exalted above nature and, in the Word become flesh, in Christ, one with nature. Calvin meant it in this way also; in his **Institutes** he observes that in a certain sense we can say that God and nature are one. Both sides of the truth must be held fast; an emphasis on the exaltedness of God above nature, can quickly lead to deism, while the trend which emphasises God’s coincidence with nature easily becomes pantheism. Here too, the full truth cannot be captured in a single formula. And the same applies to the exaltedness of God above time, and His entering into time.

With the creation and recreation of the world God has indeed hidden all “signs and wonders” in the root of nature, out of which they are driven by the working of His Word and Spirit.

Dr Wolvekamp wishes to convey his great appreciation for the lecture. What he had heard thus far from Diemer in a number of expositions had a programmatic character, and this made him sceptical. This lecture testifies to originality and is a step in the right direction. The lecturer here puts into practice the programme that he had earlier explained theoretically. This is very appealing.

Dr Diemer thanks Dr Wolvekamp for these words and expresses the hope that more and more people will be gripped by the claim of a radical Christian study of science. Only they can help us out of the many existing difficulties and incorrect posing of the problems.

Dr de Heer has listened with great pleasure and is very happy with this afternoon. The theses were somewhat difficult to understand, but the further explanation by Dr Diemer made everything clear. De Heer sees his own work as a doctor confirmed in these reflections. Insofar as he has understood them, he is in complete agreement with Diemer. He has seen the truth of these things in Moettlingen, and the lecturer gave a thoroughly scientific and yet biblically grounded formulation of this truth. God’s plan and goal that He has set for Himself are realised in recreated humanity. Everything that happens is an exertion of love to achieve this goal. This applies also to the work of doctors. The medical practitioner who only treats the symptoms of diseases as they present themselves does piecemeal work. Unless he recognises of the spiritual character of sin, he merely does therapy on the symptoms. Medicine according to the intention of God comes into its own when it is practised by the disciples of Jesus

Christ; it is a co-operation of humanity in the plan of God for the cure of sin-sickness. The devil's cures are only pseudo-cures. Dr Diemer has extended this idea and applied it to all societal relationships. What it comes down to is faith in Jesus Christ, this is the means ordained by God for the recreation of mankind. These ideas are the basis on which people in Moettlingen are also working.

Dr Diemer appreciates very much the testimony of Dr de Heer and can wholly agree with it.

Mr Hendriks remarks that the explanation did much to clarify the theses. He would now like to further formulate a few thoughts which came to him.

1st. Diemer began with the remark that all things are directed (to a goal?). Is that correct? Diemer mentioned the example of a spider's web, that is designed in a completely efficient manner to catch prey. But is it not also true that the structure and function of the organs are such, that such a web can be formed. The causes and the goals are inseparable; they are the necessary conditions for the survival of things; causality and teleology are in reality one. This is also pointed out in Scripture, which states that all things are from and to God. Everything is thus "bi-polarly directed."

2nd. As far as miracle is concerned, could we also say it this way: an absolute belief and a knowledge of God's hidden will are necessary for miracles. Miracles belong to the growth process of the Kingdom of God. However, as medical science, for example, progresses, our trust comes to lie more and more in medicine. Jesus cured epileptic lunatics by the powerful word of his will; now we cure it with Phenobarbital. Is there not a danger that people place more and more faith and confidence in the secondary cause (means/remedy) and forget the First Cause, namely God, so that as a result when Jesus comes back, will he scarcely find faith? Does the advance of science thus undermine faith?

3rd. With respect to the days of creation, Diemer has remarked that they are not fixed within time. According to Genesis 1:1, God created time, space and matter in the beginning, that is to say, at a specific moment. These three have an absolute beginning and form a trinity. Now I can certainly accept that the first act of creation continues to proceed, that here and now each thing exists from and through and unto God, and that in this sense we can speak of a *creatio continua*. And when God then forms the light of the stars on the first day, the development and the growth process of the stars will presumably also continue on the second and third day, and on the fourth day our solar system receives its order and comes into being; and after that the growth process of the star systems still continues, so that here, too, we can speak in a certain sense of a *creatio continua*. The same applies, for example, to the plant world. When the gaseous earth comes into being on the second day and the seas and the land, with the plant kingdom shooting up, on the third, then the development certainly continues on the fourth day (although that is not mentioned) and also after that the development process of plants by no means ceases.

In one sense, therefore, we can call all this a *creatio continua* and we certainly do not need to think of the creation days as six precisely defined periods. Once matter is created, there is no longer any possibility of a stand-still, and everything hastens

untiringly towards completion. But when the Bible speaks of six creation days, then they are in their totality, still specifically temporal, and are completed with the creation of Eve. The Biblical creation story does, therefore, link our conception to a frame of six creation episodes, to the six great miracles of creation which are mentioned there. And after this sixth day a certain condition of rest is entered into in this sense, that no new elements and no essentially new creatures arise any more. I can thus say that the six creation days must not be considered as six completed periods; nevertheless, they are still events which took place within time, in the framework of a creation week, and which occurred in the sequence of the creation story.

To the questions of Dr Hendriks Dr Diemer answers as follows:

1. The current teaching of final causes, purposes and objectives in living nature, also called teleology, is based on the belief that the Creator has structured the organisms for the purpose of performing of specific functions. Thus, for example, the body of a bird was arranged for the purpose of flight in the air, the eye for seeing and the spider's web for catching insects. This teleology is inseparably connected with the vitalistic philosophy of nature, in which organisms are considered as analogous to the products of culture and technology. Just as a rake serves for raking and is constructed efficiently for this task, so a web serves to catch flies. There is, however, a major difference between these two. The rake was designed by man with an eye to a specific function or intention. The historically determined representation of this function we call the cause of the form. We can speak here of a *causa finalis* or final cause, which has used the *causae efficientes*, (the active causes of the manufacturer of the rake) and directed them to the end result, namely, the completed rake. For the completion of an efficient rake is the goal that the manufacturer set for himself. And the goal of one who rakes is the raking up of a piece of ground, The presentation of a finely raked flowerbed is the final cause of the process of raking; the active causes of the user of the rake stand in service of this goal and are directed to that end.

In biology, however, the words "goal," "final cause" and "suitability" do not belong. For to which "goal" are the organs of the spider and its web directed? We cannot call the catching of flies by the manufacturing of its web the "goal" of the spider; hence we are also not able to say of the web that it is directed in an efficient fashion. A goal is the planned result of an act or series of acts. It is static, finished, delimited. When the rake is completed or the flowerbed well raked, the goal is achieved. But the life-process knows no static goals; it moves in a continual becoming and developing. It is a dynamic process that does not go from one moment of rest via an action or series of actions to a subsequent moment of rest. There is no preconceived form of fixed results to which it was striving.

The Creator has also fixed no goals for living beings. However, according to the Scriptures, he has given to them the commission to propagate themselves and to fill the earth. The creatures are perfectly capable of fulfilling this commission. Everything in the lives of plants and animals is directed to maintaining and expanding the species. There is a life's plan for each species that is intimately interwoven not only with the number of other species of living beings but with the plan of the whole of nature.

There is a carefully planned relationship between an animal and its environment. A spider fits into a certain environment with specific enemies and specific sorts of prey and is structured accordingly. Body structure and manner of life of the spider are not to be separated from one another; the structure is the expression of specific vital functions and hence is also perfectly arranged for these functions. All planned relationships in which the spider stands to other creatures and to its milieu are reflected in its body structure. The animal is, in the full sense of the word, one with its "Umwelt," with its life's milieu.

Living beings are not composed according to function, but systematically. Thus the relationships between spider and web, spider and prey, spider and waylayer, spider and atmosphere, spider and territory, are reflected in the spider's body. In the structure of the web the relationships between web and spider, web and insect, web and surroundings (resistance of the air, trees, etc) are reflected. All organs have a significance, a meaningful function and the discovery of this function belongs to the task of the biologist.

All life's activities have a significance, for they are directed above themselves to a whole, to the maintenance and the propagation of the life connection, to the maintenance of the dynamics of life-process of the species. The causality of life processes is a vital, an organic, a biotic causality. This concept of biotic causality does not, however, include that of the *causa finalis* or of the teleology of vitalism. The causality of living phenomena is not of a substantial nature or character; it is not vitalistic entelechy, but a functional, systematic causality, which has its foundation in the creation. The course of the development of life is specified in the fixed creation plan, in which is contained the causal connection of the phenomena of life. Not causality and teleology but causality and plan or order are one in the development of life.

A web can be formed because it fits in the systematic or causal coherence of the development of the spider. A web is made in a specific way by a specific structure and function of the organs, for the functions of organs are expressed in the body structure. This is not to say, however, that the actual causes of the web are to be sought in the structure and in the functions of organs. The structure and perceptible movements of organs also contain the reasons for the origin of the web. But these mechanistic causes, which can be analysed quantitatively and experimentally and which form the necessary conditions for the survival of the species, stand in the service of the biotic causes, of the coherence of cause and plan in the spider's life, which can be unlocked only through a biological, qualitative analysis.

2. Jesus cured lunatic epileptics by the authoritative word of his will. Today we cure them with Phenobarbital, says Mr Hendriks, and he sees in this a contrast with miraculous healing. Diemer, however, cannot share in this view. So-called miraculous healings simply use natural powers and abilities in the root of temporal reality other than those used in so-called ordinary healings. Each healing process rests on the activating of the divine re-creating power in the root of humanity's existence and is a sign of the miracle of recreation worked by God in this root. A healing by means of Phenobarbital or any other medicine is as much a sign of God's recreating miracle power as a cure through the action of the Spirit of Christ, without any means other

than the word spoken with power. Christ does not perform magic in a supernatural manner; rather, he brings about radical recreation in human organisms via the autonomous sympathetic nervous system, that regulates and controls many important life-functions. When a medicine is used to combat sickness in organs whose functions are to some degree regulated through the sympathetic nervous system, the result is totally dependent on the trust that the patient puts in that remedy, and on the suggestion, which originates from that medicine and on the treatments of the physician. Could that remedy not just as well be of a psychical nature as of a physical-chemical one?

The progress of science has indeed very heavily undermined faith in supernatural miracles. From a christian standpoint we can only be thankful for this, because this kind of belief in miracles is not at all Scriptural. Only belief in the centrally worked miracles of creation, providence and re-creation is Scriptural; and these miracles are facts from which science must proceed, which it can never refute. But whenever - as, alas, so often happens in christian circles - the man of science proceeds from abstractions such as "natural powers and abilities" and posits these as "secondary causes" in themselves, independent of the root of all things, and does not consider the cures effected through these causes to be real miracles (reserving this term for those cases in which "supernatural intervention" must be assumed) then indeed people can fear only the worst for their faith from the progress of science.

The trust that is placed in medicine again and again proves to be deceptive. These medicines have in themselves only very limited efficacy; without faith in the miracle of re-creation as a centrally working power to restore, they do not bring about any cure. So many people now ascribe miraculous power to medicines, wherein they blindly believe, or to the attending physicians, in whom they put a blind confidence. Faith is also present here, but it is an idolatrous faith that honours the creature rather than the Creator and Re-creator. However, that such a faith can lead to cures cannot be denied.

3. Mr Hendriks holds a different view about the "time" of creation to Diemer. Diemer agrees with Augustine: The creation is not bound to time and in principle transcends it. The "in the beginning" is indeed the absolute beginning of time, but it is itself not a specific moment in time; rather, it encompasses the entire temporal duration and the whole chronological order of the created cosmos. It is the creating Word to which our eye of faith is directed in the creation story. The Scripture can only communicate the creative activity of this Word in the form of an event that is enacted over a certain period of time. The human faith function is bound to time and can thus only understand the things of eternity when these are revealed in temporal attire.

Diemer cannot accept a "trinity" of time, space and matter. According to him, this manner of speaking betrays a dualism between a material world existing in time and space on the one hand, and a spiritual world above this on the other hand. Diemer, however, proceeds from a totality created in the beginning, in which the whole continuity of the cosmic time duration with all created things lies potentially already hidden.

Diemer has furthermore a different conception of the *creatio continua* from Mr Hendriks. He sees it not as a continuously progressing deed of creation in (cosmic) time, which lies in the lengthening of the creation deed “in the beginning” and through which things even now still receive existence from and through God, but as a maintaining and providing rule of the creation completed in the beginning and in the six “days.” The *creatio continua* is never to be separated from the proper creation act of God. Nor does it occur in the cosmic temporal duration, but coincides with the working of the eternal power and wisdom of God, which continually bears the created things and leads them to their completion in time.

Diemer can only consider the views of Mr Hendriks concerning the days of creation as speculation, which wants to make a place in the creation story for the results of natural science, but which can not be justified exegetically. The facts of natural science have their place, however, in the unfolding process of the original and of the six day creation; they are founded on this creation process, which is not bound to cosmic temporal duration and through which the constant order-foundation is laid, wherein these facts function and appear in the course of time.

Dr Wurth conveys his gratitude for the lecture; he especially considers it of great importance that Dr Diemer has broken so radically with all supra-naturalism with respect to miracle. The supra-naturalistic criticism, as applied for example by Dr Jasperse to the Moettlingen movement, only allows for an occasional breaking through of the causal order of nature within the realm of the history of special revelation. If we in this way deny the possibility of faith-miracles in our time, we are virtually defenseless against modern natural science, which also denies the miracles in the Bible.

Dr Wurth wishes to put some questions to Dr Diemer.

1. Is there in his position a boundary between miracles and the non-miraculous? Or is everything miraculous here? “Primitive man” also saw everything as a miracle. This is not an argument against this view. “Primitive man” also saw the world much more in a religious light.
2. Can one still accept boundaries between miracles of grace (the re-creation) and those of creation and providence? And what is the difference between these two?
3. Precisely how does Dr Diemer see the relation between miracle and sign?
4. In what manner must the line be drawn between these very fruitful ideas which Dr Diemer has developed with respect to miracle, and for example, the practise of medicine? Do faith in miracles and making use of, for example, medical means stand over against each other? Is not rather the whole of medical science based on the miracle of the healing power of Christ?
5. Further, in which direction must or should “faith-therapy” be sought? It does not seek to make symptoms disappear, but to cure the total person. But is it not also of importance to put this whole person again in the community where he belongs? The real person is the person in society. Is this not also the intent of modern work-therapy?

Dr Diemer answers:

1. Only the religious person can acknowledge miracles, for a miracle is the revelation of the reality of God in this world. The more deeply one realises the dependence of all things upon God, the more shall he see the creation as miraculous. Whoever, on the other hand, begins with seeking the causes of things and events in natural laws, and sets these laws over against divine miracle, which is then reserved for special historical phenomena, will have less and less room for miracles as science progresses. Scripture, however, excludes nothing from miracle, not even the sinful magic in which the power of Satan is revealed. It sees the whole of reality in a specifically religious light, namely, as absolutely dependent on its Creator, Provider, Governor and Re-creator. It is God who works all things through His Word and Spirit, according to his eternal counsel, and all God's works are called wonderful in Scripture. The Bible's authors were indeed more deeply religious and stood closer to the truth and reality of God than we Westerners, who are so thoroughly schooled in abstract and rational thinking, and who have therefore to a great extent lost sight of the totality and the origin of reality. Whoever does not see miracle as primary will never get to see it. The so-called "primitive mentality" of the authors of the Bible is by no means an inferior one that is overcome by science, but one which moves in intimate and living contact with the origin of things.

2. By miracle and the miracles of re-creation Dr Diemer understands the whole process of redemption from sin, sickness, suffering and injury in the cosmos - both in the world of humans and in the living and even inanimate nature - which God works in the root of reality. In each individual healing process, whether of minerals or plants or animals, whether of the human body or the human spirit, the recreating, restoring power of Christ reveals itself; hence we see the miracle of recreating grace. The miracles of recreation thus presuppose those of the creation and providence and are not to be separated from them. It is therefore not possible to fix a boundary between these two.

3. Dr Diemer is of the opinion that miracle and sign are very closely connected, but not coinciding. The miracle of miracles is the revelation of the reality of God in Jesus Christ, wherein God's miraculous deeds of creation, providence and re-creation (which as a coherent totality of ordinances, have come about not in but above cosmic time) are concentrated as in their root. All these miraculous deeds, works, or things, are the real miracles which determine the existence of all things; in other words, the development of the world in cosmic time is first made possible by them. Only by the signs, however, do we come to know these miracles. They are the events which are enacted in the course of cosmic time within the predetermined arrangements: the movement and development processes, the instinctive behaviour, the words and deeds of humans in culture and technology, the curing of diseases, the deliverances from ailments and suffering, from danger, from distress, the penalties for sin, etc. etc. These signs must never be separated from the miracles which they reveal. A sign is, after all, a **miracle**-sign; it points to the miracle work of creation, providence and re-creation, worked by God in the root of all things that lies at its foundation. That is why the Scripture more than once mentions signs and wonders in one breath.

While miracles are thus absolute, the signs possess a relative character, for they reveal the absolute miracles at specific times and in specific places.

4. Diemer is convinced that belief in miracles and the use of medical means are not contradictory. He agrees completely with Dr Wurth that medical science is totally based on the miracle of Christ's healing power. A healing through Phenobarbital is as much a miracle sign, a sign of the recreating power of Christ, as a spontaneous healing by Christ's word of power. Each healing, however it comes into being, testifies to the reality of the re-creating Word. This was already pointed out in the answer to the second question of Mr Hendriks.

5. Also with reference to the conception of men as communal beings can Diemer wholly agree with the thinking of Dr Wurth. The further outworking, however, he will leave to competent physicians, who alone are in a position to recognise the practical possibilities.

Dr Reitsma remarks: When we compare the miracles of Moses and those of the magicians, are there then possibilities within the reach of man which still lie within the limits of the normal and which in faith become reality?

Dr Diemer answers: He is convinced that some people possess certain normal human abilities in a much stronger measure than others. These come into operation under specific circumstances. Signs can thus be performed through a strong faith, by heathens as well as by Christians. The difference concerns the direction in which these signs point: the Kingdom of God or the realm of darkness.

Dr Landwehr asks about the significance of the story in the Gospels, where Jesus sends out his disciples, and the warning he couples with this. When they return with the enthusiastic information that the spirits obey them, Jesus emphasised that their names are recorded in the Book of Life. Can we not deduce from this that of all miracles of recreation the one esteemed the greatest by Him is that people are again restored to their original relationship of love to God?

Diemer answered: The central miracle of recreation indeed lies in the restoration of the original human relation of love to God. This restoration now does not apply to individual human beings, but to the whole Church of Christ on earth. Therefore the greatest "signs and wonders" are those which are directed to the preservation and the completion of the Kingdom of God on earth.

The chairman thanks Diemer for his well documented and instructive lecture. Nothing more being on the agenda, the chairman closes the meeting after thanking Dr Diemer.

J H Landwehr, Secretary.

Dr J F Reitsma, Chairman.