

**The  
Standard  
Bearer**

**A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE**

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## THE STANDARD BEARER

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## NOTICE

Men, for an evening of Spiritual enjoyment attend the Men's League meeting.

WHEN April 3, 8:00 p.m.

WHERE Hope Prot. Reformed Church

SPEAKER Rev. J. Kortering

TOPIC The Importance of Maintaining the Three Forms of Unity and the Formula of Subscription

H. Dykstra, Sec'y.

## MEDITATION—

## Victoriously Finished

by Rev. J. Kortering

*"When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar he said, It is finished, and yielded up his spirit."*

John 19:30

Finished!

The darkness had passed, the light had returned.  
What a victory.

Listen, "And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice he said, "Father into thy hand I commend my spirit, and having said this he gave up the ghost."

Luke 23:46. The words of our text must have preceded these words by only a few moments. The idea is obvious, "Finished, Father, I'm coming home!"

Such a word demands sober and prayerful consideration. It will not do to return to Calvary as a spectator. The cross was no drama; it was real. Blood, greedy



gambling, fickle fear, vinegar, all mingled together to form the last drop in the vessel of time. The fulness had come. To reflect on such a stupendous moment demands participation, "What think ye, whose son was he?"

Victory seemed the farthest thing from the cross.

A bloodied tear-stained trail led to that bare skull.

Listen to Him speak. "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." The darkness closed in upon the intimate circle; Peter, James and John went to sleep. Jesus went forward a little and fell on the ground and the valley of Kidron echoed, "Abba Father, all things are possible unto thee; remove this cup from me: howbeit not what I will, but what thou wilt." If there ever was a supplicating prayer it was this one, for, "being in an agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became as it were great drops of blood falling down upon the ground."

The blood that stained the earth in the lone hills of Gethsemane was but a smear of that which was about to flow in the hours ahead.

Soon the whine of the flagellum and the splattered sound of torn flesh filled the halls of justice. Seventy less one! Pilate thought that the beaten, mutilated, bloodied body of Jesus would surely evoke some sympathy from the howling mass. The "culture" of depraved man knows no love, therefore they cried out the more saying, "Crucify him, crucify him!"

Another sound! The pounding of nails drawing more blood. With outstretched arms the Lamb placed Himself upon the altar to die. With heaving, sweating, cursing the soldiers lifted up the horizontal beam to be fastened to the vertical already embedded in the rocky soil. More pounding. And there they crucified Him! There He hung in open shame, nailed to the cross, about to bear the death of the damned. Soon the swelling pain tore through his mortal frame. From parched lips came the cry, "I thirst".

All hell was around Him.

With drunken jest the chief priests pointed to the superscription and defiantly cried, "Let the Christ, the King of Israel, now come down from the cross, that we may see and believe." The passersby railed on him, wagging their heads and saying, "Thou that destroyest the temple and buildest it in three days, save thyself; if thou art the Son of God come down from the cross." The malefactor railed on him saying, "Art not thou the Christ? save thyself and us."

From the bowels of hell came the searing cry, "My God, My God why hast thou forsaken me?"

What think ye? Whose son is He?

Pity? Oh, vanity! Pity is for a victim, not the victor.

Take another look from a little different perspective.

We're in the garden, the prayer of submission completed. Jesus has returned to His disciples. Together they press on till they come face to face with the "familiar friend." "Whom seek ye?" "Jesus of Nazareth" the reply. "I am He," and immediately they went backward and fell to the ground! "Thinkest thou that I cannot beseech my Father and he shall even now send me more than twelve legions of angels?" A victim? Hardly.

Or listen to Him speak to the judge, "Thou wouldst

have no power against me except it were given thee from above; therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath greater sin."

To the daughters of Jerusalem he solemnly declared, "Weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children."

From the first moment of the cross came the prayer from His lips, "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do."

Surely it was true even as He had said, "No man taketh my life, I lay down my life for my sheep." The cross itself was proof, "He cried out with a *loud voice*, "Father into thy hands I commend my Spirit."

All this is summed up in one word, "Finished."

We must be careful to notice that Jesus did not say, "I am finished." If that were so, this sixth cross word would have been that of a dying Christ. We would then imagine that Jesus had just come forth from His suffering the pains of death and hell, and now weary, dehydrated, gasping for his final breath, he sighed, "Finished," it's all over, now I can die. This is not what Jesus said.

In like manner we must carefully note that Jesus did not say, "I finished it." If we would try to force this idea upon this word, we would be guilty of going into the opposite extreme and interpret this as a word of boasting. The I, the Person of Christ, is not on the foreground here; in fact, Christ used the passive voice. He did not intend to say, I finished the work, as the Son of God I have triumphed and come through victoriously; now, Father, take me home. This was true, of course, but that is not the intent of this word. Always He remained the humble obedient servant; here, too.

Rather the emphasis was upon His work. Thus it is always with the servant, that the glory may be unto Him who sent Him to do that work.

It is striking to remember that even in His intense suffering, Jesus was mindful that the work He was doing had been laid out for Him in the eternal plan of His Father. It was brought before His consciousness in the form of the prophetic word of the Old Testament. John, in reflection upon the mystery of the cross, makes mention of this. "After this Jesus knowing that all things are now finished, that the Scripture might be accomplished, saith, I thirst."

Thus it must be explained here also. Jesus knew the Word of God in the Old Testament described His suffering and death. He understood that from the beginning of history, the expectation of the people of God centered in His suffering. Trembling Adam had been calmed by this prospect, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel," Gen. 3:15. Likewise David spoke of that suffering, "I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels . . . for dogs have compassed me; the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me; they pierced my hands and my feet . . . but be not thou far from me, O Lord; O my strength, haste thee to help me." Ps. 22:14-20. Like a powerful wave this thought sweeps throughout the whole Old Testament and reaches a mighty crest in the words of



Jeremiah, a lone captive in the midst of Jerusalem, "Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce wrath." Lamentations 1:12.

Yes, what God had said of the suffering of Christ throughout the whole of the Scriptures was now fulfilled, it was completed. And Christ was conscious of this, "Finished."

Well may we ask the question, to whom did Christ address this word? In answering this question we will be able to fathom a little of the depth of its meaning.

Quite apparently and foremost, this word was addressed to His Father. It was the word of the servant to the Sovereign.

Jesus knew all too well that His suffering on the cross was not the suffering for His own sins. The burden of sin that He bore was of them whom the Father had given Him. He had expressed that most beautifully in His intercessory prayer, "Father the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son may glorify thee even as thou gavest him authority over all flesh, that whatsoever thou hast given him, to them he should give eternal life." These words Jesus had prayed on the door-step of Gethsemane.

Now as He was coming out of the intense suffering, He knew that the sentence of death that His righteous Father had imposed upon Him in behalf of His elect was now satisfied, for He had suffered the pangs of death and hell in their place.

Triumphantly he cried out, "Finished."

This indicates to us that Jesus understood that He was victorious, or he could never have said to His Father, Finished! There were a number of things that pointed out to Him this truth. He realized a diminishing of the suffering. Normally when one dies the suffering is greatest at the moment of death. With Jesus this was different. His descension into hell was the moment of greatest suffering both for body and soul. During the three hours of darkness the gates of hell were open and the flood of God's divine wrath poured over Him. All He

could cry in that moment of terror was, "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" As soon as that intense suffering somewhat abated, His attention was immediately drawn to His bodily suffering for then He cried, "I thirst." It was at this moment that Jesus realized that He had drunk the cup, the dregs of hellish wrath for the sins of His people had been drained, and therefore He cried, Finished!

Besides this, His heavenly Father afforded Him other proof. The hell that He bore was objectively manifested in the darkness. That darkness which surrounded the cross was the same as the darkness God revealed in Egypt; it was a symbol of God's absolute wrath. In the midst of the darkness Jesus suffered silently. For three hours He bore in perfect love our sentence of death. He bore everlasting death in three hours of time. Christ realized that He did carry it away, for the light returned to the scene of the cross. How else could the soldiers have seen the sponge and wine? Light had returned. That was God's proof to His Son that the burden of wrath was carried away and the work of the obedient servant was acceptable in His sight.

Triumphantly Christ responded, Finished!

That word is also spoken to us. Recorded for us in the Divine Scriptures, this word echoes through the ages as a cry of victory for us to hear. What more need we hear when the burden of guilt presses sorely upon us? Time and again we gaze with tear-filled eyes at the horror of our sin and reflect upon the curse that is due to us for them. Oh, blessed gospel, finished! The burden has been carried, the tears, the suffering, the anguish, the pains of hell and judgment, they are all gone, for Jesus carried them away once for all. This is the gospel of "Finished" for us.

As we hear this word, our exalted Christ assures us that our sins are forgiven, we are righteous before God and heirs of everlasting life.

What think ye of the Christ, whose Son is He?

Well may we smite our breasts and say, "Surely this was the Son of God." Yea more, "My Lord and my God."

This (the working out of their salvation) does not mean that they must now work for the improvement of this present world, which is quite impossible. They need not, and they cannot "turn the world upside down." Nor does it mean that they must all be busy in a special sense in the work of the Lord. We do not all have to be preachers or missionaries, or bring souls to Christ, or be elder or deacon in the Church, or Sunday school teacher, in order to cause our salvation to serve its purpose and to reach the end for which it was given unto us. On the contrary, the mother in her home and in the midst of her children, the father in his place of work, whatever it may be, the clerk behind the counter, the cobbler at his bench, every one in his own position and calling, will work out his own salvation when in that calling, and with his whole soul and mind and heart and strength, he serves the Lord Jesus Christ, and lives through faith from the principle of the regenerated life that has been wrought in his inmost heart. To let the light that is within us shine, that our Father which is in heaven may be glorified, — that it is to work out our own salvation!

- H. Hoeksema, "The Wonder of Grace," p. 85



## EDITORIALS—

# "Report of the Doctrinal Committee"

## A Critical Study

(2)

# The Committee and the "Offer"

by Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

### BACKGROUND

It was to be expected that the element of a "general, well-meant offer" would occupy a large part in the Report of the Doctrinal Committee.

This is true for several reasons.

In the first place, there is the broader historical reason of the First Point of 1924 and the place which that First Point has had in the thinking, the theology, the preaching, and the motivation of the preaching (both at home and on the mission field) ever since 1924. I refer, of course, especially to "*het puntje van het Eerste Punt*," the general grace doctrine of the First Point, which must not be confused with the original proposition of the First Point proper, or the common grace doctrine. It is safe to say that if that general grace doctrine had not been inserted into the First Point of 1924, there would have been no "Dekker Case" at present. The latter is simply a development — a necessary development, let me add, — of the former. This is not to say that there was no Arminian tendency in the Christian Reformed Church prior to 1924, and that therefore there would have been no development of Arminianism later. For fact is that one of the concerns of the men of "The Witness" was the threat of Arminianism; and one of that group (who, however, later supported 1924) complained long before 1924 that the churches were full of Arminianism and feared that the battle was already lost. And if there had been no Arminian tendency present in the churches, "*het puntje van het Eerste Punt*" (literally: the little point of the First Point) would, of course, never have seen the light of day.

There is another factor involved in this picture, of course. That factor is that the Christian Reformed Church adopted and from then on attempted to follow a *double-track theology*; and the two tracks were divergent, — the Arminian and the Reformed track. The theology of the CRC became like the two-faced idol, Janus. It was but inevitable that in due time someone would press the inconsistency of the divergent tracks to its logical consequence, and say to the churches, "Let us follow the Arminian track con-

sistently, — or at least more consistently than the men of 1924 did." This is what Prof. Dekker said in effect when he came out for universal atonement. Or, to return to my other figure, he chose for the Arminian face of Janus.

In the second place, there is the fact that Prof. Dekker and those who agree with his position (like James Daane and Harry Boer and Dr. Henry Stob) injected the First Point of 1924 into the picture. Daane pointed up the issue rather well, I think, by a question like this: "How can such a non-saving grace come to expression in the preaching of the gospel that preaches only saving grace?" The same is true of the following statement of Daane: "To this day no one has been able to make clear to anyone that the well-meant offer of salvation is an instance, not of saving, but of a qualitatively different non-saving common grace."

In the third place, the Christian Reformed Synod automatically injected the question of the well-meant offer into the picture for its Doctrinal Committee by mentioning two items, both directly related to the First Point of 1924, among the specific items to which the Committee was to give its attention. The first was: "a. Whether the nature of the atonement and the decree of election allow for the validity of making a qualitative distinction between the general love of God and His special love for the elect." This obviously has reference to the common grace doctrine of the First Point. And the second item was: "b. Whether there is Scriptural evidence that the universal love of God includes any intent to bring about the salvation of the non-elect or to perform any redemptive act on their behalf." This, while it does not mention the term "offer" and does not speak directly the language of the First Point, unmistakably refers to the general grace doctrine of the First Point.

Let me insert at this point the suggestion that the Synod might have pin-pointed the Committee's mandate in connection with the First Point if they had used Daane's language. They might have very well assigned the committee this problem, to decide "Whether the well-meant offer of salvation is an instance of saving,



or of a qualitatively different non-saving common grace." For it must be remembered that while the First Point contains two doctrines (common grace and general grace), the element of the so-called general offer of salvation was supposedly adduced as proof for the main proposition of the First Point, namely, a supposedly common, non-saving grace. As I have said repeatedly in the past on this point, Daane is right (though he is principally dead wrong on the whole matter of God's grace) when he says, "To this day no one has been able to make clear to anyone that the well-meant offer of salvation is an instance, not of saving, but of a qualitatively different non-saving common grace." And I will add to that the fact that history has shown him to be right. The Christian Reformed Church has taught and followed, on the one hand, the antithesis-devastating doctrine of common grace and applied to the whole realm of things commonly subsumed under the term "culture." But the Christian Reformed Church has more and more followed the Arminian, general grace line in its preaching. When they adhered to the line of the general, well-meant offer, they were not really dealing in the realm of common grace whatsoever. That offer is an offer of *salvation* according to them. As such it is preached, and surely not as an offer of common grace, nor with the intent of bringing about any so-called common grace benefits, nor with the intent of leaving any other impression on the hearers than that God well-meaningly wills the *salvation* of all who hear. If you follow the well-meant offer idea, you preach just like any Arminian evangelist preaches.

But the Committee in this connection, especially in connection with point "b" quoted above, was faced by the problem of trying to maintain a two-track theology and of trying to give some kind of yes-no answer, without saying "yes" so emphatically that they justified Dekker and Daane, and without saying "no" so emphatically that they denied the First Point of 1924.

That is a rather large order, I would say. And I would also suggest that the Committee sensed this. This lies at the root of the confusion in the Committee's report. Over against Dekker's position, they try

somewhat to "soft-pedal" the offer-idea; but in the meantime, because of the First Point and its history they dare not "soft-pedal" the offer to the point of silencing it.

In the meantime, a year has elapsed since the Report was first issued.

And the problem is still there.

In fact, Synod of 1966 added a couple of problems through its committee of pre-advice, items which show plainly that the Report is not satisfactory on this crucial problem. For among the observations of Synod and the additional problems referred to in the 1966 postponement-decision you find this: "There are related problems which arise out of this context which need theological clarification and precise statement, such as the following: .....b. The relationship between election and the sincere ("sincere" or "well-meant"? The two terms are not the same. H.C.H.) offer of salvation .....d. The universal implications of the atonement."

In addition, the Committee now has no small number of statements from consistories and classes reflecting on the Report. And my educated guess is that a number of these reflect dissatisfaction with the committee's confused work on the offer-problem. In fact, I know that Classis Grand Rapids West had a committee report which proposed a statement dealing with this problem.

In addition to this, the *Reformed Journal* has begun, figuratively speaking, to club the Committee over the head with its own report.

Hence, the problem is becoming more difficult.

I do not know what the outcome will be.

But I can predict confidently that even though the original conclusions of the Committee would be adopted, the problem would still be there. For 1924 would still be there. And even if the CR Synod should affirm the doctrine of definite atonement, 1924 would still be there. And as long as it is there, no Reformed denomination which still numbers among itself those who would like to be truly Reformed, can have peace.

With this background furnished, I will begin next time, D.V., to survey the Committee's confused meanderings and findings on this important subject.

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We should be so deeply impressed with the sacredness of this calling, and with the seriousness of this task, that we put forth all our efforts, and give it the most painstaking attention and care. In the fear of God we should tremble at the very thought that, perhaps, we are not working out our own salvation as we ought. Rather than asking the question, which is so frequently asked in our day, how far we dare go into the world, and how closely we can with impunity approach the consuming flame of sin, we should fear and tremble lest we do not keep our garments clean, and lest we do not sufficiently manifest ourselves as children of light. In the true fear of the Lord, with painstaking care, trembling lest you should mar the work, work out your own salvation!

- H. Hoeksema, "The Wonder of Grace," p. 88



## EDITORIAL—

# In Support Of Movies!

by Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

That title looks incongruous on the cover of the *Standard Bearer*, does it not?

Have no fears! The *Standard Bearer* has not taken to the support of movies or of movie attendance. The title was, however, intended to catch your attention. For this editorial intends to call attention to a recent article in support of movie attendance which illustrates, among other things, the dangers inherent in the course which the Christian Reformed Synod of 1966 chose with respect to the "film arts" (more bluntly stated: the movie issue).

My reference is to Dr. John H. Bratt's little article in *The Banner*, February 10, 1967, p. 11. Writing under "Postscript" he attempts to marshal biblical support for following what he calls the "principle of discrimination" with respect to Hollywood movies. Writes he: "In fact, I think that the tenor of Scripture is strongly geared to making discerning Christians, that is, those who judge and evaluate and choose that which is right and good." Dr. Bratt then makes several references to Scripture. He concludes these references as follows:

"The Apostle John advises us to 'prove (test) the spirits' (I John 4:1).

"Such biblical counsels mean to me that rather than taking such film productions as *Sound of Music*, *Old Yaller*, *Snowwhite and the Seven Dwarfs*, *Doctor Zhivago*, and so on, and throwing them into the caldron of blanket condemnation, we ought to weigh and evaluate them on their own merits or demerits, and act accordingly."

Now I do not believe that any of the texts cited by Dr. Bratt proves his so-called principle of discrimination with respect to Hollywood movies. For: 1) I believe that drama is not legitimate art, but the perversion of good gifts of God. 2) Apart from the preceding, I do not believe that Hollywood offers a choice of "good" or "bad" such as is necessary to practice discrimination. When it is all bad, then choice is impossible.

But Dr. Bratt's flippant quotation of a few words from I John 4:1 along with the application which he makes of these words is to me nothing less than shocking. My point ought to be clear to any discerning Christian if I let Scripture speak here by quoting the entire passage of I John 4:1-3: "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of

God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God; And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God; and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world."

In the first place, of course, such misquotation of Scripture is not worthy of a student of God's Word. And it is misleading. I do not say deliberately misleading; but it is misleading, nevertheless. That little snatch of a text might sound rather pertinent to the unsuspecting.

In the second place, it seems to me that this text, quoted in full, "proves" too much for Dr. Bratt. For the basis of the "good-movies-are-legitimate" decision is supposed to lie in the realm of "common grace" and a "restraint of sin." But the text in First John (quoted in full, of course) certainly does not know of any "gray area" between light and darkness. There is, of course, no text in Scripture that does know of such a gray area. But it seems to me that such a plainly absolute statement as that of I John 4:1-3 would be about the last which Dr. Bratt would cite in this connection. Or is the doctor now suggesting that the spirit of such Hollywood movies as he mentions might possibly be "of God" and breathing a "spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh?"

But, in the third place, for those who are tempted by the movies (whether in the neighborhood theater or in your own living room on TV), — and this I write not only for our Christian Reformed brethren, but for anyone whom the shoe fits, — Dr. Bratt, in spite of his intentions to the contrary, suggests a very good antithetical test. For notice:

1) This passage admonishes us to try, prove, test, the spirits with one question in mind: are they of God, or are they not of God? A third possibility there is not. It is either...or!

2) This passage provides us with a very simple, antithetical test. The one side of the test is this: "Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God." Apply that test once to the "very best" that Hollywood has to offer. Apply it to the movies mentioned by Dr. Bratt. If you are busy



indulging in the movies in your local theater or in your home, — and mark you well, I do not say that you should; but if you are of those who yield to this temptation, — at the very moment while you are watching and listening, apply this test: is the spirit breathed by this movie a spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh? And is it therefore of God?

I know what the answer will be.

And so do you!

The other side of the test is this: "Every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God; and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world."

Apply that test once to Hollywood's productions. Ask yourself the question: is the spirit breathed by this movie a spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh? And is it therefore not of God, but the spirit of antichrist?

Again, you and I know what the outcome of the test

will be!

3) But then the question will not be downed; how can you as a Christian be entertained by the spirit of antichrist?

Perhaps for some this test is too "simplistic" or "absolutistic."

For me, however, it is simple and absolute.

And it is Scriptural!

The trouble is, of course, that this antithetical test is vitiated by the common grace theory. And while I have great sympathy for those in the Christian Reformed Church who are genuinely troubled by the "movie problem" and by the decision of 1966 (I know that there are such; and I know of a consistory that counselled its congregation to "total abstinence," in spite of the decision of their Synod), nevertheless I warn again that they fight a losing, — if not a lost, — battle on the common grace basis. The real solution lies in a repudiation of 1924 and a return to the sound Reformed principle of the absolute antithesis.

## Did You Know?

by Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

*Did you know* that John Calvin held to the view that (in his day) creation was little more than five thousand years old?

The great reformer makes only passing reference to this idea, and that too, not in his writings on creation, but in his writings on predestination. This very manner of reference, however, emphasizes that with Calvin this was an accepted idea. Recently I came across this statement while reading the "Institutes" with another purpose in mind. The quotation is from Book III, Chapter XXI, Section IV (page 174 of Volume II of the Allen Translation). I will quote enough of the section to furnish the setting of Calvin's statement:

Profane persons, I confess, suddenly lay hold of something relating to the subject of predestination, to furnish occasion for objections, cavils, reproaches, and ridicule. But if we are frightened from it by their impudence, all the principal articles of the faith must be concealed, for there is scarcely one of them which such persons as these leave unviolated by blasphemy. The refractory mind will discover as much insolence, on hearing that there are three persons in the Divine essence, as on being told, that when God created man, he foresaw what would happen concerning him. Nor will they refrain from derision on being informed, that little more than five thousand years have elapsed since the creation of the world. They will ask why the power of God was so long idle and asleep. Nothing can be advanced which they will not endeavour to ridicule. Must we, in order to check these sacrileges, say nothing of the Divinity of the Son and Spirit, or pass

over in silence the creation of the world? In this instance, and every other, the truth of God is too powerful to dread the detraction of impious men....

This quotation is worthy of attention, not because we must slavishly follow everything that Calvin says, but because:

1. It should furnish some food for thought to some who are very quick to appeal to John Calvin for all manner of pseudo-Calvinistic ideas, but who in our day are catering to evolutionistic theories and their notions of a very old earth.

2. It demonstrates that the idea of a comparatively young earth is not to be ascribed to Archbishop Usher for its origin, as is frequently suggested. This quotation at least suggests that in the history of dogma the idea of a young earth was rather commonly accepted at Calvin's time. At least, the reformer does not present it as a new and unheard of idea. But Calvin's "Institutes" were written before James Usher was born. Usher was born in 1580, and his rather famous chronology belongs to the period from 1650-1654. The widely held idea that James Usher is responsible for the idea that the earth is about six thousand years old must, therefore, be fiction.

3. This puts the much maligned James Usher, who is frequently pictured as some kind of freak, but who was actually a scholar of considerable note, in fairly good company. Those who enjoy ridiculing Archbishop Usher should save a few of their barbs for John Calvin. Or better: they should dispose of their barbs!



## CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH—

# The Providence Of God

## Miracles

by Rev. H. Veldman

We concluded our preceding article by calling to a definition of miracles which defines them as supernatural works of God. And we concluded that this distinction does not hold. One who believes in the providence of God does not distinguish between natural and supernatural works of the Lord. The Word of God calls even the most common events the works of God, as in Ps. 107:23-32 and throughout the Scriptures.

Miracles have also been defined as the immediate works of God. This, as we have noted, is Hodge's definition of the miracle. We may concede that miracles are immediate works of God. But is it not just as true that all the works of God are immediate, that all events and happenings are Divinely immediate? To be sure, the Lord works immediately when He gives sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, causes the lame to walk, raises the dead to life, restores calm to an angry and turbulent sea by the word of His mouth. But is not everything affected by the immediate operation of the Lord? It is surely the Lord Who causes the sun to rise and set every day; it is He Who causes the seed to grow in the bosom of the earth and produces the harvest. That the food we eat nourishes our bodies and the water we drink quenches our thirst is surely not because this food and drink are able to do this of themselves. The Lord always works immediately. Constantly and without ceasing He touches every phase of the world's existence; in Him we, and all things, move and live and have our being. Not a sparrow falls from the housetop without the will of our heavenly Father, and no man can make a single hair white or black. Hence, we cannot define a miracle as an immediate work of God. It is true that miracles are works of God which strike our attention as being extraordinary. However, their extraordinary character does not lie in the fact that they are immediate works of God. If this were true, then everything would be a miracle, because everything is immediate. That we often fail to see the wonder works of God in all the things that take place all around us is not because these works are not truly wonderful, but only because we are dull in our hearing and seeing; we often have no eye for the wonders of the Lord!

Finally, a third group would seek the essence of the miracle in its mysteriousness, that we cannot understand or comprehend it. Now it is, of course, true, that we cannot comprehend the miracles. But it is also true that we cannot comprehend anything. We cannot understand even the most common event. All of life, every phase of it is beyond our comprehension. Concerning this Rev. Hoeksema writes as follows in his *Dogmatics*, Locus II:

It is true that we cannot understand how the Lord can multiply the few loaves of bread in His divine hands, so that a veritable multitude can be fed thereby. But no more does it lie within the limits of my conception how a seed can fall in the earth and die, in order to bring forth fruit a hundred fold. It is certainly true that my mind is amazed when the Savior calls Lazarus out of the grave after he has been four days asleep in the dust; but no less does the birth of a little child transcend my boldest comprehension. How the Lord Jesus at the wedding of Cana could change water into wine is certainly a mystery for us; but it is no less incomprehensible for us how the vine can produce grapes and in that way change different elements into wine. In other words, it does not make any difference for my understanding whether God by His almighty power operates in the common and known way upon the vine and causes it to bring forth grapes, or whether by the same almighty power He works upon water to change that into wine. When the sun and the moon stand still upon the word of Joshua, we confess that we cannot comprehend this phenomenon; but when the Lord every morning anew causes the sun to rise on the eastern horizon, that work of God too transcends my comprehension. It is true that also according to the significance of one of the original words of wonder in Holy Scripture, the miracle causes us to stand amazed and draws our special attention. But the cause of this must not be found in the fact that we comprehend the common events and acts of God's providence, while the wonders transcend our comprehension; but much rather in this, that we become so accustomed to the daily works of God's omnipresent power that we usually pay no attention to them. In the miracle God certainly performs something special, that exactly through that special character draws the attention. Nevertheless, neither in the so-called supernatural, not in the im-



mediate character, nor in the incomprehensible character of a wonder can the proper idea of a miracle be found.

The essence of the miracle must be sought in its relation to the grace of God. The miracle belongs in the sphere of God's grace. The miracle is essentially a sign. And it is a sign of God's grace. We believe that this is the teaching of Holy Writ. The essence of the miracle cannot be sought in its "supernatural" character, because we cannot maintain the distinction between the natural and the supernatural. Neither can the miracle be defined as an immediate work of God, inasmuch as the Lord always works immediately. And we have also observed that the essence of these miraculous works of God cannot be sought in the fact that we cannot comprehend it. We cannot comprehend anything. Besides, Scripture itself connects the miracle with the grace of God. That Christ is born of a virgin is called a sign in Is. 7:14. And what a mighty sign this is! Isaiah, in Is. 7, had called upon the wicked Ahaz to ask of the Lord a sign in the depth below or in the height above. But Ahaz had refused because he hates the living, knew only too well that the Lord would give him any sign he asked, but had determined to seek help from the king of Assyria. Thereupon the fearless prophet had proclaimed to Ahaz that the Lord Himself would give him a sign, namely the birth of Immanuel from a virgin. It is obvious that this sign would be greater than any sign the wicked king could have asked either in the depths below or in the heights above. And is it not a striking phenomenon that our Lord's appearance in the flesh should be accompanied by a host of miracles. One can hardly doubt but that all these miracles are essentially related to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in our flesh and blood.

God's grace is *the* Wonder of God. The penalty of death was executed by God upon Adam and Eve and upon the entire human race when our first parents, Adam and Eve, ate of the forbidden fruit. Death passed upon them and upon all mankind. They became, in themselves, objects of wrath. They also became wholly corrupt. Created in the image of God, they became the image of the devil. They did not merely lose this image; it was changed into the image of the devil. Their light became darkness, their love of God became hatred and enmity against Him, their knowledge of God became the lie; they were filled with corruption and spiritual death. They also died physically. It is true that they did not die in the sense that their corpses lay at the foot of the tree. But they did die physically in the sense that this power of physical death began to reign in their bodies. They became subject to physical death. We must maintain this Divine visitation of God's curse upon the entire human race. There is no such thing as "Common Grace." Scripture does not speak of any injection of common grace into Adam and Eve, checking the process of death and enabling them to do good in the sight of God. But the Word of God does teach us that we are all conceived and born dead in sin and in misery and that the carnal mind is enmity against God, not being subject to the law of God, neither being able to be subject unto it. Now the grace of God

is that wonderful operation of God whereby He translates the whole creation, fallen in sin and under the curse of God, into the glory of His eternal kingdom and everlasting covenant. This heavenly renewal of all things in heavenly immortality is *the* purpose of God, which He willed from before the foundations of the world. With that purpose in mind He created all things. This is stated emphatically in Eph. 1:9-10: "Having made known unto us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself: That in the dispensation of the fulness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in Him." And there are no detours in the Lord's realization of this purpose. Unto that end He certainly created Adam mortal, that is, so that Adam could fall. Adam was the first Adam and serves the purpose of preparing the way for the second Adam, the Lord out of heaven. Sin and death must enter this world as the way through which God would lead all things into heavenly glory and immortality. And the grace of God is that wonder operation of God whereby He, through sin and death, leads the world of His eternal election into that glory of His everlasting kingdom and covenant.

Of this Wonder of the grace of God the center is Immanuel, God with us, in Jesus Christ, our Lord. He is Himself, centrally, this Wonder of Divine grace. For, He is Immanuel, God with us. He is God, breaking through our night of sin and death and of the curse. He is Immanuel, taking upon Himself our flesh and blood, and assuming all our sins and guilt, becoming sin for us, Who Himself knew no sin. And His incarnation, of course, is accompanied by *the* Wonder Sign of all ages, the conceiving of a son by a virgin. Inasmuch as the eternal Son of God takes upon Himself our flesh and blood it is, of course, imperative that our Lord Jesus Christ take upon Himself our flesh and blood without the will of man. Today the virgin birth is denied by wicked modernism, and this in spite of the fact that the Lord accompanied this birth with a sign that could not possibly be misunderstood or contradicted! Wicked modernism today declares that the conceiving of a son by a virgin was really unnecessary, that the Son of God could have assumed our flesh and blood through the will of man, could have had an earthly father as well as an earthly mother. But imagine how wicked modernism would have reacted had Jesus had an earthly father as well as an earthly mother! In Bethlehem, however, the eternal Son of God breaks through our sin and death, enters into our human flesh and blood, with all the sins of all the elect of all the ages upon His shoulders. Grace is the wonder operation of God which breaks through this accursed world. And in Immanuel the everlasting God breaks through the night of our sin and guilt and death. It is therefore understandable that this coming of the Son of God into our flesh and blood should be accompanied by the wonder sign of the virgin birth. Only once in all the history of God's covenant did the eternal Son of God take upon Himself our flesh and blood. So, this unique birth of our Lord Jesus Christ is accompanied by the unique sign, never having happened before and never to happen



again, of a virgin, as virgin, giving birth to a son. It is the will of the Lord that the world must be without excuse. They must receive a sign that cannot be contradicted, except by wicked unbelief. Indeed, Bethlehem is centrally *the* Wonder of Divine grace, centrally in

Himself. But this is not all. This Immanuel is also centrally the Wonder of Divine grace in His death and resurrection. But to this we will call attention in our following article as we conclude our articles on the miracles in Holy Writ.

## IN HIS FEAR—

# Virgins For Christ's Sake

(Continued)

by Rev. J. A. Heys

Marriage is for life.

With that truth we were busy last time. And we made the remark last time that "Moses did not give the Israelites a bill of divorcement that dissolved the legal tie of marriage and allowed remarriage, and Jesus does not agree with the Jews that he (Moses) did." Jesus gave answer to the contentious Jews, but His answer was not that those divorced according to Moses' command might remarry because the marriage bond was severed by man. We wish at this time to refer you to Moses' precepts as Paul presents them in Romans 7:1-3, "Know ye not, brethren (for I speak to them that know the law) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth? For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. So then, if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress; but if her husband be dead, she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man." Not only is the language here very, very clear, but it may be noted that this is the law which God gave through Moses. If Moses gave a precept and permission to Israel for the divorced to remarry because of the hardness of their hearts, it is not the law of God. But Paul here speaks of the law of God and not of any man-made or Moses-made exceptions. Paul repeats this in his epistle to the Corinthians. Thus in I Corinthians 7:39 he writes, "The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord." And Moses, speaking as God's mouthpiece, does not advocate and did not teach a divorce that allowed remarriage.

The hardness of man's heart may require separation. The husband who, though he may be able to forgive, sins against his conscience by living further with a faithless mate may have to separate and give her a word of divorce that declares that he cannot live with her any more as husband and wife. But they remain before God

as one flesh. Jesus, in Matthew 19:3-9, where He again speaks of divorce, and now in answer to these contentious and fault-finding Jews, says unequivocally, "What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." This surely is not agreeing that Moses gave a bill of divorcement that allows remarriage of either party. Besides, and perhaps this should be placed first as far as the meaning of the text is concerned, the hardness of the heart that demands divorce in the sense of living separately, so that the woman is not under the domination of the man under his roof, is to be found in an adulterous *life*. Where the mate has slipped into great temptation--whether she set the occasion herself or was trapped by a cleverly laid plan makes no difference--and repents and leaves that evil way, the rule applies to forgive and receive her back. But there are instances where the hard heart of the adulterer or adulteress produces a life of fornication and faithlessness. In such instances the husband or wife may need to give a word or bill of divorcement in the sense of separation for the family's sake and the children's sake. But there simply cannot be any denying that Jesus condemns attempts even to put away in the sense of claiming that the marriage bond has been dissolved, that the two are not before God one flesh anymore; and that either party is free to remarry.

Granted that a partner is unfaithful and sins against either husband or wife, this does not grant that offended party the right to commit a sin. The breaking of a commandment of God in one aspect of its broad meaning does not give right to break it in another phase of its meaning. The man who has been defrauded by falsification does not by virtue of that fact have the right to backbite and slander the defrauder. One on whose life an attempt has been made to kill does not receive because of this fact a God-given right now to injure bodily that would-be murderer. And one sinned against by a faithless life's companion does not receive the right to sin against that other half of the "one flesh" by



adding a foreign element of a new "wife" or "husband."

In that light Jesus' words in Matthew 19:9 are so significant, "And I say unto you Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery; and whoso marrieth her which is put away (as the innocent party) committeth adultery." Why cannot a man marry the innocent party? Why does he commit adultery, if he does marry a woman put away by her husband because he wants to commit adultery due to the hardness of his heart and not because she has been unfaithful to him? Because, as Jesus said, "Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let no man put asunder." And this is not mere advice. It is the command of God. Let not! Do so only under the penalty of the wages of sin which death is the meaning. God joined together. God considers them one flesh until one of the two's flesh dies. See again Romans 7:1-3 and I Corinthians 7:39.

Returning to Matthew 7:31 and 32 we may note that Jesus says, "Whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery; and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery." If you please! That man who puts away the innocent party causes her to commit adultery. No, the idea is not that she sins by an act which he commits. The text says clearly enough that *he causes* her to commit adultery. And that last part can only mean that he stigmatizes her as an adulteress. Since it may be necessary to put a wife away because she lives in fornication, and this is the only condition under which and grounds for which God grants a bill of divorce—that means separation from under one roof, when a man puts away his wife in the church world, all must conclude that she is an adulteress. And a woman who puts away in Israel and in the church world an husband stigmatizes him as a philandering, filthy and faithless partner. What is more, the verb in the phrase "causeth her to commit adultery," that is, in the last part of this phrase, is in the original in the passive form. It does not speak then of an act which she commits but which is committed upon her by her hardhearted husband. He puts asunder what before God is still joined to him in God's judgment. He, that hardhearted husband, deals with her as a foreign element and therein sins against her. And the man who would take this innocent party for his wife also sins against her by adding himself as a foreign element between and along with that which God will consider one flesh until either one of them die, and their flesh is no more.

And the church that allows and advocates remarriage of the divorced goes contrary to the ordinances of Christ, the Head of the Church and the Bridegroom Who is ever faithful to His Bride, the Church. She had better review her stand and be herself a virgin for Christ's sake. The reason for advocating or for condemning remarriage of the divorced and of allowing divorces for any other reason than fornication must not be utilitarian. And convenience or inconvenience must not rule the Church. To be a virgin for Christ's sake the Church must be pure in doctrine and walk regardless of the

temptations and difficulties of the way. She may not allow rebellion against the authorities. She may not smile in approval of idolatry, image worship, taking God's name in vain and desecrating the Sabbath. But she may not dirty her garments by allowing fornication and adultery among her membership by unscriptural divorces and remarriage of the divorced. She will not receive Christ's smile of approval if she does; and in generations she will become the harlot that He destroys as the false church. She must not become like the world. She must be an imitator of God and follow after Christ and not the Antichrist.

There is an element that belongs to this picture and our young people do well to take heed to it. Our youth, in the very first place, must not become unequally yoked with the unbeliever and find all too soon spiritual incompatibility! That is the very worst kind of incompatibility that there is; and those who through their foolishness find themselves therein are to be pitied. How tragic that a young man or a young woman of the Church of Jesus Christ finds it so difficult to be a virgin for His sake because of a worldly-minded mate! Our children are simply asking for trouble when they deliberately seek to yoke themselves unequally with one who will not be an help meet for them in the spiritual sense. And now we must come back to that which we wrote last time. God gave to Adam an help meet for him and not an help mate. Be it far from our covenant seed simply to seek a play mate for themselves or a "plaything." Marriage is a serious business that is for life!

An help meet for Adam is an help suitable for him from the point of view of God's purpose in creating him. The word *meet* in the expression means fit, suitable, appropriate, becoming. Adam was created to be God's friend-servant. Eve was created to help him in that capacity. In his natural life, in his spiritual life, in his life as an husband and as a father, in his work as prophet, priest and king Eve was to be at his side to help him and not to be a distraction, a hinderance and detriment. And our young people in the church are to seek one that will help them and not hinder them.

A pretty face is what attracts the flesh. A witty mind may appeal to the flesh. A quiet and meek nature that can be ruled, the clinging vine type that seems to emphasize and satisfy the male ego does appeal to the flesh. But the criterion for both young men and young women is spiritual compatibility not only but spiritual ability to help the other in the covenant calling of living together in the service of God to the praise of His name in every aspect of the married life. Man and wife together must be a synchronized team that functions as a virgin of Christ.

Paul puts it this way in that passage to which we already referred, I Corinthians 9:39: ". . . She is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord." ONLY IN THE LORD is what our covenant youth must constantly bear in mind with all its relationships with the other sex. And there is an ocean of truth in that phrase. It means first of all that they marry so that both of them are in the Lord and that there is no foreign



mixture of the Antichrist and of unbelief between the two of them and Christ. To be married in the Lord means that husband and wife together are the virgin of Christ. It means that they both are members of His Church. For the Church is the body of Christ, and unless both husband and wife are in Him by being in His body, the Church, they are not married in the Lord. Then one member may be in the Lord, but they are not as man and wife, as one flesh.

They must therefore both be in the faith, for that also is to be in the Lord. He is the object of our faith and must be in our single life but also in marriage bond. They must be of the *same* faith; and they must be of the same *specific* faith. Membership of one in the Roman Catholic Church and the other in a Protestant Church is spiritual incompatibility which brings nothing but grief and tears and hindrance in the spiritual life. It does not help either party one bit! But neither does marrying into different denominations of Protestantism that disagree on fundamental points of doctrine. There will be spiritual

disagreement and grief in such an union. There are times in some communities and in small congregations and denominations where this marrying in the same denomination is impossible. Then our youth is still obliged to seek a life's partner that will help in the service and worship of God and to choose one who is (1) willing to be instructed in his faith, and (2) is sincerely willing to agree not to agitate against the other's faith. And even then they should not get serious until it is determined that they both will conscientiously before God embrace the same faith. For being married in the Lord also means being married in the presence or eyes or favour of the Lord. We do it before His face whether we are conscious of that fact or not. And our seed's calling is to choose a life's partner with HIM, whose virgin we are to be, in mind. Then when some natural incompatibilities do appear the common love of God and of His Christ will hold them together and enable them to live one life of dedication to Him, and receive His children to train in His fear.

## TRYING THE SPIRITS—

# Dispensationalism A Minus-Proof Speculation

by Rev. R. C. Harbach

The Bible of modern Dispensationalism, of which C. I. Scofield was editor-in-chief, states in a footnote on Eph. 3:6 that "The mystery 'hid in God' was the divine purpose to make Jew and Gentile a wholly new thing, 'the church, which is his (Christ's) body' ...The revelation of this mystery, which was foretold but not explained by Christ (Mt. 16:18), was committed to Paul. In his writings alone we find the doctrine, position, walk and destiny of the church." This, however, is so far from the truth, as we have firmly demonstrated and will continue to do so, that one wonders whether dispensationalists ever give a careful reading to the Word of God. That the body of Christ is not at all to be found in the O.T., since it is with the N.T. "a wholly new thing" is a conjecture without the least support from Scripture. Nor does Scofield give any evidence for his strange hypothesis in the note where it is advanced.

But let us continue our examination of the O.T. on this score. In our last writing we left off at Psalm 40. We now turn to Psalm 69. "O God, Thou knowest *My foolishness*, and *My sins* are not hid from Thee."

(v. 5) This is another well-known messianic Psalm, describing the Sin-bearer, Gethsemane, the Cross, those responsible for the crucifixion, and Judas, the betrayer. Here the sins of His people are referred to as *His* sins, so close the *oneness* He has with them in the imputation of *their* sin and condemnation to Him.

"His name shall endure forever: His name shall continue as long as the sun, and men shall be *blessed in Him*: all nations shall call Him blessed." (Ps. 72:17) Notice, not blessed *by* Him, but "*in Him*," or as in Eph. 1:3, "Blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies *in Christ*." Scofield, taking no note of all this, theorizes that "as the Israelite's blessing was in the land, so the Christian's blessing is 'in Christ.'" For the "in Christ" truth actually was not only a favorite with Paul, but also with David before him. "All my springs are *in Thee*." (Ps. 87:7)

"This He ordained in Joseph for a testimony, when He went out through the land of Egypt: where I heard a language that I understood not." (Psalm 81:5) The personal pronouns here all refer to the God of Jacob who affirms that the Egyptian language He understood



not! How can the omniscient God speak in this manner of Himself, whose wisdom is unsearchable? He does so in His Son who, as so united with His people, so one with them, spoke as though their ignorance were His.

"O Lord God of hosts, hear my prayer, give ear, O God of Jacob. Selah. Behold, O God our Shield, and *look upon the face of Thine Anointed.*" (Ps. 84:8, 9) The Anointed is *Christ*, so that David pled that his prayer be heard *for Christ's sake!* Daniel did, too. "Now therefore, O our God, hear the prayer of Thy servant, and his supplications, and cause Thy face to shine upon Thy sanctuary that is desolate, *for the Lord's sake.*" (9:17) In the face of this Scripture it cannot be maintained that Israel was destined to receive earthly blessings, and not the spiritual blessings destined for the Church.

Psalm 89 is another messianic prophecy, as is evident in verse 27. Following this verse, the Father promises to preserve Christ's "seed" and "children." Then it is said, "If *they* break My statutes, and keep not My commandments, then will I visit *their* transgression with the rod, and *their* iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless My lovingkindness will I not utterly take from *Him*," not "them," although He is speaking of them. The remarkable change in pronouns again reveals the oneness of the members of Christ's body with their Head. Then it ought to be carefully noted how this section closes. "It (His throne) shall be established for ever as the moon, and as a faithful witness *in heaven.*" (v. 37) How, in the light of this, can it be said that the true Israel of the O.T. was an *earthly* people? For here we have the character and *location* of Christ's throne! From this it is as clear as the sun that Christ's kingdom is *eternal* and *heavenly*. (See II Peter 1:11, ASV).

"My substance was not hid from Thee when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Thine eyes didst see My substance, yet being unperfect; and in Thy book all My members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them." (Ps. 139:15, 16) On this, in his *magnum opus* on the Psalms, *The Treasury of David*, Spurgeon said, "The great Lord knows who belong to Christ; his eye perceives the chosen members who shall yet be made one with the living person of the mystical Christ. Those of the elect who are as yet unborn, or unrenewed, are nevertheless written in the Lord's book. As the form of Eve grew up in silence and secrecy under the fashioning hand of the Maker, so at this hour is the Bride being fashioned for the Lord Jesus; or, to change the figure — a body is being prepared in which the life and glory of the indwelling Lord shall forever be displayed. The Lord knoweth them that are his; he has a specially familiar acquaintance with the members of the body of Christ; he sees their substance, unperfect though they be." (Vol. 7, p. 227)

Now compare the following: "In His days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely, and this is His name whereby HE shall be called, 'The Lord our righteousness.'" (Jer. 23:6) "In those days Judah shall be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell safely; and

this is the name wherewith SHE shall be called, 'The Lord our righteousness.'" (33:16) The fact is, the Bridegroom and the Bride are given the same name; or upon being married to Another (Rom. 7:14) *she* takes *His* name! Here the truth of the body of Christ in the O.T. is as plainly revealed, although, of course, not as fully, as in the N.T., where the Church and all its members are denominated *Christ* in I Cor. 12:12. For in that Pauline passage not Christ as an individual is meant, but Christ as identified and united with His covenant members! There is not a man on earth able to refute this asseveration.

It is the plain teaching of plain Scripture that the Church is the body of Christ, and that this body embraces all who are representatively and organically united to Him. He is the Last Adam, and as such, the federal and vital Head of the whole Election of Grace. Read Eph. 5:23, where it is written, "Christ is the Head of the Church, *and He is the Saviour* of the Body." What this irrefutably proves is that the *Headship* of Christ and His *Saviourhood* are co-extensive, and that all *saved* by Him belong to and are members of the Church! Then if Adam, Abel, Enoch, Noah and Abraham were *saved* by God in view of Christ's effectual atonement, then *they* are members of *the Body!*

The O.T. saints were not only members of the Church and body of Christ, but they also *knew* this and delighted in the *spiritual* and *eternal* realities of the Gospel. For Moses and believers of the Mosaic dispensation "had respect unto the recompense of the reward." They "did all eat the same *spiritual* meat, and did all drink the same *spiritual* drink; for they drank of that *spiritual* Rock that followed them; and that Rock was *Christ.*" (I Cor. 10:1-4) This idea is further proved in Heb. 11:24-26 where we read that Moses did "esteem the reproach of *Christ* greater riches than the treasures of Egypt." The O.T. saints, then, were not ignorant of their Savior, *Christ*. But what, at this place, is meant by "Christ," or, as in the original, "*the Christ?*" Not merely Christ personally and individually considered, but Christ viewed as inseparably united with His people, or as the Puritans put it, *Christ mystical*, i.e., the *Church*. This is borne out by the words, "esteeming the *reproach of Christ*" which are parallel to the words "choosing rather to suffer *afflictions* with *the people* of God." This is not the only parallelism in the passage, but is sufficient to show how "the Christ" and "the people" are used practically synonymously! The "people of God" (v. 25) are in verse 26 designated "the Christ." This, as we said, is the title given to the Church in I Cor. 12:12. Then the true Israel in the O.T. were members of Christ!

In view of all that we have up to this point set forth, it shocks our senses when Dispensationalists tell us that there was no such thing as an Old Testament Church, that it is therefore all wrong to speak of such. The writer himself once thus believed the Word of God, but did so ignorantly, not in the face of such evidence as has been thus far presented. The writer in his dispensationalist days was something of the ignoramus he supposed the O.T. saint was. For any



neophyte Bible student ought to be able to understand that in *every* age "the path of the just is (has been and shall be) as the shining light, which shines more and more unto the perfect day." (Prov. 4:18); that therefore the O.T. Israel was not without the spiritual light of the gospel! Even a stripling in the faith ought to be able to see that the Bible cannot affirm that there was "*the church* in the wilderness," (Acts 7:38) and then in one of the epistles declare there was *no church* in O.T. times. For the Bible does not contradict itself. Nor does it make such a statement in any of the epistles. This is dispensationalism, not Paul, nor his epistles. Also a sleepy Christian can wake up and see that when Jesus said, "Upon this rock I will build My church"

(Mt. 16:18), that He was not speaking of the body of Christ, or as we call it, the church triumphant, for He added, "*and* the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." He referred rather to the church as visible on earth, the church militant, for it would be pointless to speak of the gates of hell prevailing against the church triumphant, or against the body of Christ. Even a Sunday School pupil can see that not only did Stephen believe there was a "*church in the wilderness*," but that the Messiah speaking out of the old congregation (Ps. 22:22), said, "I will declare Thy name unto My brethren; in the midst of the *church* will I sing praise unto Thee." (Heb. 2:12) Moses, Stephen and Christ — in the same Church!

## A CLOUD OF WITNESSES—

# Jonathan's Arrows

by Rev. B. Woudenberg

*"And when the lad was come to the place of the arrow which Jonathan had shot, Jonathan cried after the lad, and said, Is not the arrow beyond thee?*

*And Jonathan cried after the lad, Make speed, haste, stay not. And Jonathan's lad gathered up the arrows, and came to his master.*

*I Samuel 20:37, 38*

Together in the field, along with their God, David and Jonathan reaffirmed the covenant of friendship which they shared together in mutual love. There was a reason for this, for they felt instinctively that henceforth they would not be able to share their lives together as they had in the past. Each knew, and each now knew that the other knew that in the end it was not Jonathan that was to be king over Israel but David. Even more, they knew that Saul knew this also and was determined with all that was in him to prevent it. Because of this, David was now a fugitive in the land while Jonathan could not escape the responsibilities that came to him as the son of the king. Their lives from now on were bound to go in separate ways. Nevertheless, before they parted, they stopped to establish a covenant, to affirm their abiding love and friendship together. Regardless of what happened, they promised, this love would remain unending and unchanged, rooted in their mutual love for their God.

Only after this was done did Jonathan return to the question which David had last asked. The question was, "Who shall tell me? or what if thy father answer thee roughly?" and it concerned the attempt which was to

be made by Jonathan to discover just exactly how determined his father was in his opposition to David. The question was a good one; for it was entirely possible that, if Saul suspected that Jonathan was working to help David, he would prevent Jonathan from contacting David directly. How then could they be sure of a way in which Jonathan could pass on to David whatever information he should discover? It was a matter of providing for all possibilities. Accordingly, Jonathan laid out the following plan. "Tomorrow," he said, "is the new moon; and thou shalt be missed, because thy seat will be empty. And when thou hast stayed three days, then thou shalt go down quickly, and come to the place where thou didst hide thyself when the business was in hand, and shall remain by the stone Ezel. And I will shoot three arrows on the side thereof, as though I shot at a mark. And, behold, I will send a lad saying, Go, find out the arrows. If I expressly say unto the lad, Behold, the arrows are on this side of thee, take them; then come thou: for there is peace to thee, and no hurt; as the LORD liveth. But if I say thus unto the young man, Behold, the arrows are beyond thee; go thy way: for the LORD hath sent thee away. And as touching the



matter which thou and I have spoken of, behold, the LORD be between thee and me for ever." Jonathan's plan was very simply a means by which he could inform David of the outcome of his investigation even if his father Saul should assign someone to follow him so as to prevent him from conferring with David. Jonathan could merely pretend that he was going out to engage in some customary target-practice and at the same time pass on to David all of the information which he would need to know.

The plan of Jonathan was quickly agreed upon; and David hid himself again in the field while Jonathan returned to the palace.

The next day came with the feast of the new moon, and matters went pretty much the way that David and Jonathan had anticipated. The royal table was set in the customary manner, with seats of honor for Jonathan, David, and Abner the captain of the army; but, of course, the seat of David was empty. Nevertheless, Saul said nothing. It was not uncommon for a fighting man such as David to find himself ceremonially unclean at the time of the new moon and therefore to absent himself from the first day of the feast. Actually Saul had wanted David to be there very badly for he had intended to make a final end of the whole matter, while he had never thought that David might ever presume not to appear when he was expected at the table of the king. Thus Saul said to himself, "Something hath befallen him, he is not clean; surely he is not clean." The very thought that David might escape him once again by failing to come to this feast was too painful for Saul even to allow himself to consider it.

The next day, however, the second day of the feast came and still the seat of David was empty. Now the possibility of uncleanness could no longer apply, for enough time had passed that David might have purified himself. It was evident that something had happened which Saul had not anticipated. Harshly, and yet in a way rather plaintively, Saul turned to Jonathan and demanded, "Wherefore cometh not the son of Jesse to meat, neither yesterday, nor to day?"

This was exactly, of course, the question which Jonathan was waiting for. It gave him the opportunity to test the feelings of his father toward David just as David had suggested. Quickly Jonathan answered, "David earnestly asked leave of me to go to Bethlehem: and he said, Let me go, I pray thee; for our family hath a sacrifice in the city; and my brother, he hath commanded me to be there: and now, if I have found favor in thine eyes, let me get away, I pray thee, and see my brethren. Therefore he cometh not unto the king's table."

With Saul it was not at all a question as to whether there might be an element of truth in what Jonathan said or not. The fact just stared him in the face that David was not coming to the palace for this feast; he was not coming at all. The more often David eluded him, the more determined Saul was becoming to put David out of the way. Ever since he had gone himself to Naioth at Ramah, he had looked forward to this feast of the new moon with firm determination to finish the matter then. Now that feast had come, and David

was not there and was not coming there, and his own son Jonathan had assisted David in staying away. What was he to do? No matter how he tried, things always seemed to go wrong in the end. It was the curse of Samuel coming to him again. It infuriated Saul each time again that he felt its power binding him. With a surge the blood rushed to his head; but what could he do with David gone and escaped once again? The only one around whom he could implicate was his own son Jonathan; and, because his anger had to vent itself somewhere, it was on Jonathan that it did. With the screaming voice of an insane man, he shouted at him, "Thou son of the perverse rebellious woman, do not I know that thou hast chosen the son of Jesse to thine own confusion, and unto the confusion of thy mother's nakedness? For as long as the son of Jesse liveth upon the ground, thou shalt not be established, nor thy kingdom. Wherefore now send and fetch him unto me, for he shall surely die." So great had Saul's fury against David become that he had nothing but scorn and derision for anyone who would take David's part. But there was only one thing he had with which to counteract the power that protected David; that was his own vain pride and authority. Desperately he attempted to use it, ordering Jonathan to bring David to him.

Jonathan's attempt to answer his father was, perhaps, rather foolish. Being himself a man of strict honesty and justice, he felt that truth and justice held the key to all persuasion. Even before his father's fury, he could not resist the temptation to try to bring his father around to his own views. Pleading for justice, he asked, "Wherefore shall he be slain? what hath he done?"

Earlier, when Saul had still been concerned with maintaining a good appearance, this sort of argument had worked; but not any longer. Basically Saul had no real concern for right and wrong. In fact, through his years of wilful pride, he had finally come to the position where the only right to him was what he wanted, and whatever opposed his own personal desire was wrong. To have Jonathan now attempt to challenge him with an appeal to a higher principle than his own desire only infuriated him beyond even the control of his own reason. Just as with David before, Saul picked up his javelin and threw it with all of his might at Jonathan. Such was his determination to kill David and all who defended him.

It was more than the otherwise calm nature of Jonathan was able to endure. Even as he sprang aside to evade the javelin of his father, his own temper broke and he rushed from the table and the room in utter fury. It was evident now that justice and truth meant nothing to his father whatever; all that mattered was his own, so easily offended pride. Deeply grieved, Jonathan did not stop until he had come to his own room and there he remained until his anger subsided. All through that day he sat alone in his sorrow without as much as eating. It was not until the next morning that he picked up his bow and arrows, and calling one of the palace children to him went out as though to practice his marksmanship in the fields.



As unobtrusively as possible Jonathan made his way out into the field to the place which he and David had agreed upon. All the time as he went, he watched with special care if there should be anyone following him under orders of his father, especially because his father had seemed quite aware of the fact that he and David were still in contact with each other. He observed nothing, but still he followed exactly the plan which had been laid down. Coming to the rocky ridge of Ezel where David was hiding, he sent the young lad who was with him out into the field to retrieve the arrows as they were shot. Then he took a few arrows and shot them far beyond where the boy was standing. Hardly had the lad turned to pursue them but Jonathan cried out in a loud voice, "Is not the arrow beyond thee? Make speed, haste, stay not." To anyone else these would have appeared as nothing more than directions to help the lad locate the spent arrows; but to David crouching attentively in his hiding place it meant far more. It was just as he had expected. Saul's hatred was not just a momentary flare-up; it was an unwavering determination which threatened his life. Henceforth there would be no welcome for him in the

royal palace as long as Saul remained king.

Once the boy had returned with the arrows, Jonathan could well have returned to the palace while David set out upon his way. By this time, however, Jonathan had determined quite surely that there was no one who had followed him into the field. Thus he gave the bow and arrows to the lad and instructed him to return them to the palace while he remained alone in the field, and without suspicion the lad went.

No sooner was the lad gone than David stepped forth from his hiding place. Deeply moved, he bowed himself three times to the ground in acknowledgement of Jonathan's kindness; and, when Jonathan approached him, the two young men fell upon each other's necks, kissed and wept. There was little more to say. They had talked themselves out a few days before. Now the parting words were Jonathan's as he said to David, "Go in peace, forasmuch as we have sworn both of us in the name of the LORD, saying, the LORD be between me and thee, and between my seed and thy seed for ever." So the two men parted, friends, bound with a bond of love, but never to meet again in this life on the same intimate terms which they had known in the past.

## ALL AROUND US—

# Does "Realism" Justify Sin?

## The Worship of Satan

## News Briefs

by Prof. H. Hanko

### DOES "REALISM" JUSTIFY SIN?

There is a continuing debate going on concerning the moral rightness of depicting sin in works of art — novels, dramatic productions, paintings, etc. The problem has reached crisis proportions in the world. With the advent of the "new morality" anything goes. Magazines, books, movies, dramatic productions all seem to vie with each other to see which can be the dirtiest and foulest. Swearing, sex and sexual aberrations, murder and lying saturate the arts. But the world does not have the distinction of being alone in this respect. The problem has entered the church and church-related schools. Sin is graphically portrayed in every form it takes in literary productions and

dramas coming from even Reformed educational institutions.

But in our own circles as well there are marked tendencies in this direction. Perhaps not as serious as elsewhere, but they are there. One hears from time to time a plea being made, for example, to permit our children in school to read books in which sex and swearing are very common.

And, as often as not, the justification for all this is the magic word "realism". I suppose it is difficult to keep from being prudish about all this; and there are problems here which certainly need to be discussed. But what does bother me considerably is the fact that the cry for realism is oftentimes a justification for



grossest sin in works of art. Realism is supposed to justify reading novels with sex in them. Realism broadens the field of literature to embrace just about everything. In fact, the term has become a handy way to defend sin and flout the words of the apostle Paul: "For it is a shame even to speak of these things which are done of them in secret." Eph. 5:12.

But is this cry of realism sufficient? In a recent article in *Christianity Today*, Addison H. Leitch had some pointed comments to make concerning this matter. He is writing chiefly about dramatic productions, which he approves — and we must take issue with him at this point. But his remarks are pertinent to all forms of literary art as well. He writes in part:

It might be worth our time to reconsider this whole argument about realism. We must admit that almost anything that is portrayed must be somewhere, among some people, realistic. But whether we need to know or have set before us on the stage or described in novels what realism in these matters may mean to some kinds of people is a nice question.

I like to think of it this way. The rose bush in front of our house is just as real as the garbage can at the back. I think it is a sound instinct that the garbage ought to be kept at the back of the house, with the lid on it. I don't think doing this is narrow-minded, naive, old-hat, provincial, or square. It is a piece of progress that to my mind makes our century more pleasant and certainly more healthful than previous ones. The streets of our cities were once almost like cesspools, and that was real enough. Now we have learned to clean up the streets, and that is real, too. What I am trying to say is that to argue realism is not quite enough. Something else is at stake here.

In the movie and the play *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* we have plenty of realism. The older couple in the play have made a very sad mess out of their lives, and in the course of the play they pull in the younger couple. With plenty of liquor and lots of foul language and one woman who acts like a fishwife and another who can't keep from falling apart in tears, we get a strong dose of realism — at least what is real in some marriages and some families. Depending upon where we sit ourselves, we are more or less horrified by being allowed to look into something like this.

Perhaps the play has a moral: Don't drink so much and do your best not to get your marriage into a mess like that. There is, of course, a touching and very dramatic problem in the case of the older couple, and there is a kind of hope at the end that they have found each other and are about to reach out and touch now as persons dealing with their problems. All I can say is three cheers for that....

...Great literature is not only a reflection of life but also a creator of life....

...Can we justify anything so long as it is artfully done for the sake of art? I pull back from this argument, too. Let your mind run to some of the physical things people have to do in the normal course of a day. We rightly do these behind closed doors. They are absolutely real, but doing them, even doing them well, on the stage would certainly be no argument for their presentation.

...I have often wondered why a college drama department can present on the stage viewpoints and language that would get a man fired if he used them in the classroom. (And the same can be said of novels

—H.H.) We are all so afraid of being thought unsophisticated that we run for cover at the least scorn of one who is so sure that we must have realism....

It is amusing but also tragic that in the American culture we are so unsophisticated as to believe that our young people should be allowed everything in the name of freedom. Then we wake up with such naive surprise because somehow man-woman relationships have gone very sour indeed.

There is a point here that needs to be underscored. Realism itself is not justification for much of what is done and put into books. Whether it be a stage production or a novel, this excuse simply will not do. Rather, a work of art of any kind (and surely a novel) must have more justification than that it depicts reality to be chosen as good and permissible for our children. It has to have its chief justification in the fact that there is in it a communication of truth. It must not only passively reflect what life is; it must also point the way to what life ought to be. It must help in the difficult task of interpreting life in the light of God's Word and explaining the calling of life according to the precepts of God. Then it is good. We ought to beware of pleas for realism — especially when they become an excuse to read or write anything and everything.

#### THE WORSHIP OF SATAN

Recently an article appeared in the *Grand Rapids Press* (and, no doubt, in other papers across the country, for it was carried by Associated Press Wire Service) in which was described a wedding performed in the name of Satan. It was performed by a sorcerer in the living room of a black-walled Satanist Church. The officiating sorcerer wore devil's horns; the ceremony was performed in an atmosphere of devil worship and sorcery, for the participants were surrounded by human skeletons, stuffed opossums and leopards, and a physician's examining table which later became a bar. The one officiating also wore a black hood and a robe, rang a gong periodically, recited an ode to the satyr Pan and spoke incantations in a language he himself had invented. In explanation of the ceremony, the one officiating said: "This marriage was conceived not in heaven, but in hell, which is the mold from which heaven was cast and which has kept religion alive from the beginning."

This is only one instance of a phenomenal growth of demonism throughout the world — especially in civilized countries. All sorts of demonic cults are being formed and sorcery, soothsaying, necromancy, fortune telling, occultism, etc. is spreading rapidly. Many times the rites of societies mimic the sacred ceremonies of the church — as the wedding described above and as various rites of devil baptism. The enemy of the Church is indeed, first of all, Satan. He remains implacably committed to subject this creation to himself so that he may rule as sovereign lord over all things in God's place. The Bible tells us that this will someday actually come to pass before the Lord returns; but Scripture also suggests in some places that at this time men will literally worship Satan and bow before him as their king. Surely this is happening



now. A startling and fearful sign of the evil of our times.

#### NEWS BRIEFS

From time to time various attempts are being made by certain groups to control religious radio broadcasting. This has been tried in the past — as e.g., by the National Council of Churches; this will be tried again in the future.

Recently, the United Church of Christ, financed by foundation grants amounting to a total of \$85,000 has announced plans to monitor all religious broadcasting. The avowed goal is to silence broadcasts which “tend to be weighed with extremist viewpoints.” When a certain broadcast reveals such extremist tendencies in the opinion of UCC officials, attempts will be made to stop the program through appeals to the Federal Communications Commission and, if necessary, in the courts.

This aim of the UCC is, no doubt, directed against various “right-wing” broadcasts, — although they do not say this. The reason and justification for this is, according to UCC officials, to keep from the air all programs which do not serve the general interest of the public. It is not difficult to envision what will happen if these liberals are ever successful in their attempts. Perhaps for the time they will be content in banning “right-wing” broadcasts. But they have a pretty potent argument that also the proclamation of the truth of God’s Word does not serve the general interest of the public. And their venom will be turned against the truth and those who proclaim it.

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According to the *Presbyterian Journal* progress is being made in merger talks between Southern Presbyterians and the Reformed Church of America. The document ready for consideration by the churches deals with church government. Some proposals in the document include:

— changes in ordination vows. Among these, officers will not be asked to affirm, as once they did, that the Bible is “the Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice.” Nor will they be asked to “sincerely receive and adopt the Confession of Faith and Catechisms of this Church, as containing the

system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures.” They will be asked to promise to bring any disagreements with fundamental doctrines to the attention of their presbyteries.

— changes in the election of elders and deacons. All officebearers elected subsequent to the merger will no longer serve indefinite or lifetime tenures as is now done in Presbyterian Churches. They will have to retire after a certain length of time.

The committee discussing merger has not yet made recommendations concerning the decision of the Southern Presbyterians to join the COCU talks.

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Briefly we note (hoping to discuss this more fully at some future time) a trend of major proportions within the Roman Catholic Church towards the liberalism of Protestantism. This liberalism, culminating in the death-of-God movement, is being openly espoused in Roman Catholic circles.

And in connection with this, there is a movement among Roman Catholics in Europe gaining strength, to have conversations with communists. Several efforts have already been put forth in this direction; and the idea is being hailed by Romish and Protestant liberals alike.

Along with this, it is of more than passing interest that the pope is paying increased attention to communism. He seems to have charted a course for himself in which he will attempt to act as mediator between Western and communist governments. He has already tried this in connection with the Viet Nam War, and seems intent on enlarging his role to include all differences between the West and the Communist bloc.

There are significant implications in all this. Not only do these developments point to increasing possibilities of union between Romanism and Protestantism, but they point to a greater *political* role for the Vatican. The church is walking a way that leads not only to merger within the ecclesiastical community; but the same road to unity leads to an unholy alliance between the church and the state. There are other evidences of this; the one mentioned above is part of a larger picture. But the church which joins the state in a common cause will also have to bear the burden of joining in a common cause which is of Satan.

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But this salvation they must work out. They must let that gift and power of salvation serve the purpose for which it was freely bestowed upon them. They must bring that glorious gift of salvation by grace to manifestation in their whole life. In their entire walk, and that, too, in the midst of the world that lies in darkness, they must reveal themselves as those that have been delivered from the dominion of sin, and liberated unto righteousness. From the principle of their new life in Christ Jesus, they must live in every walk of life, representing the cause of the Son of God in the world. Thus the salvation that was wrought within them will be worked out by them.

— H. Hoeksema, “The Wonder of Grace,” pp. 84, 85



## EXAMINING ECUMENICALISM—

# The W.C.C. - and Its Conference on Church and Society

by Rev. G. Van Baren

Much is being heard, also in Reformed circles, of the World Council of Churches (W.C.C.). In our country, the Reformed Church in America is a member. The Christian Reformed Church is not — but there is considerable agitation within it to change this situation. The argument is often heard that a scriptural, confessional, Calvinistic church can influence such an organization far more from within than from without. This attitude appears to me to be very similar to that of the proverbial fly who enters into the "parlor" of the spider.

The W.C.C. and its related organizations continue to reveal themselves. This revelation of its character was made again last July in Geneva, Switzerland. At that time there was held a "Conference on Church and Society." This conference was under the auspices of the W.C.C.; it consisted of a body of "experts" who would speak to the W.C.C., but also who revealed the general direction in which the W.C.C. is going. Twice I have attempted to obtain the documents which were approved at that gathering — but I have not received them to date. However, an interesting account and analysis of this Conference was presented in the latest *Christianity Today* by Alice Widener (February 17, 1967). The article was reprinted from the magazine *U.S.A.*, Vol. 12, Nos. 24-25. I intend to quote from this article, and especially those quotes that article contains from the documents of the Conference itself.

## THE BEASTS OF REVELATION 13

As one reads an article as that appearing in *Christianity Today*, shivers go up and down one's spine. Here one sees presented an unfolding of that which Revelation speaks of. In chapter 13 there are presented two beasts—terrible beasts. The first comes from the sea with his seven heads, ten horns, and ten crowns. Without entering into detail, we can state that this beast represents the political world-power as it reaches its climax and culmination in the kingdom of the antichrist. The second beast with horns as a lamb and voice of a dragon represents the social-religious-scientific aspect of the kingdom of the

antichrist. This second beast "exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed." This second beast uses its powers of persuasion (it has a voice of a dragon) to convince men to worship the first beast. Yet the second beast comes as a mild lamb (it has horns as a lamb) which serves to convince many that there is in this beast nothing to fear. One cannot help noticing that when a gathering such as the recent Conference on Church and Society, under sponsorship of the W.C.C., takes place, there is both in declaration and appearance a close resemblance to that second beast of Revelation 13.

The Conference on Church and Society emphasized particularly four points: "(1) Modern technology....; (2) The need for accelerated development in Asia, Africa, and Latin America....; (3) The struggle for world peace....; (4) The problem of just political and social order and the changing role of the state."

Though there were various documents treated at this Conference, and though I have only brief excerpts of these, yet several points seem to emerge.

First, this brain-child of the W.C.C. would like to see a one-world power, or at least a supranational organization, with power to act in various spheres. The conference called for a "gradual imposition of supranational approaches upon national efforts." There is the recommendation that the Church urge governments "to introduce economic, political and social education into national school systems to support also the idea of "a diminution of national sovereignty." In another place the Conference proposes a "supranational authority (over) the two major nuclear powers."

This supranational power must see to the proper and equal distribution of wealth:

Unfortunately the level of government contributions has only rarely been determined in consultation with the receiver. These contributions, even to international agencies, are voluntary, short-term commitments. However, the transfer of capital and skill through governmental channels must be considered as



a long-term process, and more formal, medium or long-term arrangements and commitments are becoming increasingly necessary for the efficient operation of these agencies and the carrying out of development programs.

To carry out the above "longterm arrangements and commitments," eventually there will have to be "a system of international taxation."

To carry out the plans of this Conference, a virtual dictatorship will be necessary. The plans involve nothing less than a "restructuring of the world economy." This "restructuring" would also require force to carry it out and would, admittedly, work hardship for many:

The fundamental restructuring of the world economy necessarily implies temporary dislocation and possible suffering for a large number of people. The first task of the churches in this situation is to speak to the government or power structure responsible and to insist that prior measures be taken to prevent or at least to minimize and alleviate the difficulties which individuals and groups may have to face. Only after every preventive measure has been taken should the Church prepare people to accept and overcome these problems and impart the vision of a wider world order for which restructuring is a necessary preliminary.

Secondly, this Conference, supposedly representing the thought of the "Churches" and reflecting (supposedly) the testimony of Scripture, presents a "morality" which is wholly against the thought of Scripture and the law of God. It minimizes the calling of the church to preach the gospel and, in fact, scoffs at the position of the church in the past ages. It rejects the idea that it is enough "to seek to save souls and improve individual characters on the assumption that good people will produce good government." And it scorns the past position of the church: "the problem of the contemporary structure of the Church is that it was devised for a past form of society, which was static, generally agrarian, and religiously conformist."

What then is the calling of the church? What are the rules it must follow? The proposals of the Conference of "churchmen" are shocking. It suggests that the church must even encourage revolution to carry out that plan to "restructure" society.

Political involvement at times confronts Christians with especially difficult issues such as the use of constitutional or extra-constitutional methods of political action, the use of violent or non-violent action, and the rights of minorities or other oppressed groups within the life of a nation.

...In many cases where legislation violates an acceptable constitution, and no speedy means of legal relief are available, the Christian may be called to civic disobedience (sit-down strikes, passive disobedience or deliberate violation of laws). In cases in which the constitution itself is inadequate, the Christian is called to work for its amendment in the interest of

firmer guarantees of human rights. Where such changes are impossible, the Christian may come to the conclusion that he has no alternative but to violate the constitution in order to make possible a better one.... We understand that laws may be defied in the defence of the constitution, and that the constitution may be defied in defence of human rights.

....No generally valid over-all prescription can be given for the ways in which changes in the organization of political and economic power in developing nations should occur and how Christians should respond to such changes....

There are, however, at least two generalizations which can be made about the approach of Christians to the reorganization of the structures of power in the "Third World." One is that wherever small elites rule at the expense of the Welfare of the majority, political change toward achieving a more just order as quickly as possible should be actively promoted and supported by Christians. The second is that, in cases where such changes are needed, the use by Christians of revolutionary methods — by which is meant violent overthrow of an existing political order — cannot be excluded a priori. For in such cases, it may very well be that the use of violent methods is the only recourse of those who wish to avoid prolongation of the vast covert violence which the existing order involves. But Christians should think of the day after the revolution, when justice must be established by clear minds and in good conscience. There is no virtue in violence itself, but only in what will come after it. In some instances significant changes have been made by non-violent means, and Christians must develop greater skill and wisdom in using these.

One would almost think that those people have never read Romans 13.

One final fact emerges from the documents of this Conference. The "Church" wants to cooperate in all of this with the world — in fact, must conform itself to the world in order to accomplish its goals. The Conference stated, "In many parts of the world today, the Church represents a relatively small minority, participating in the struggle for the future of man alongside other religions and secular movements. Moreover, it can hope to contribute to the transformation of the world only as it is itself transformed in contact with the world." And again, "As Christians, we are committed to working for the transformation of society working in and through the established institutions according to their rules."

There is left no Christ. There is no preaching of the gospel. There is no maintaining of the truths of the Word of God. There is no care for that truth that the church and its members are pilgrims and strangers on the earth. There is no looking for the kingdom of heaven. None of this appears to be the concern of this Conference. What is seen is the rising of the second beast of Revelation 13. Watch him! You will be hearing more and more of him in the "conferences" which the "churches" hold.

When God saves us through Jesus Christ our Lord, His purpose is that we may be to the glory of His grace in the Beloved, may declare His praises, and bring forth fruit unto righteousness, walking as children of light in the midst of the world that lieth in darkness.

- H. Hoeksema, "The Wonder of Grace," p. 82



## QUESTION BOX

# Questions On Dispensationalism

by Rev. R. C. Harbach

## Concerning The Coming of Christ

by Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

The editor has asked the undersigned (a former Washingtonian) to answer two interesting statements offered by Mr. Lionel Woodworth, a subscriber, of Spokane, Washington. First, he writes:

In reading the article on dispensationalism on pages 176 to 178 of *The Standard Bearer* for January 15, 1967, I was puzzled by the apparent contradictions between it and the writings of various dispensational theologians. For example, Reverend Harbach writes that "Dispensationalists claim much of both Testaments belongs not to us." In contrast, Dr. G. Coleman Luck, chairman of the Department of Theology of the Moody Bible Institute, writes that Dispensationalists "insist that no part of Scripture must be relegated to some other age with the foolish statement that it has nothing to do with us at all," and goes on to quote II Tim. 3:16; I Cor. 10:11 and Rom 15:4 (*Good News Broadcaster*, June 1966, p. 11).

Answer: The quotation above given is really no contrast to the statement made in the January article; it is, in fact, a practical admission of the statement. Notice, it is not said in the words posed that dispensationalists "insist that no part of Scripture must be relegated to some other age." Whoever would come with that statement would not be dispensationalist after all! For that is what the dispensationalist does — he relegates certain parts of Scripture to some other, a past, the present or a future, age. For example, the undersigned was taught in the dispensational school founded by C. I. Scofield that the Sermon on the Mount is not the standard for the Christian, in the Church, but is the constitution of the earthly kingdom of the Jews in a future millennium. Expressions may be found like this, and worse, in Scofield's introduction to the Four Gospels and in his notes on the Gospel According to Matthew. What the above statement maintains is that dispensationalists "insist that no part of Scripture must be relegated to some other age *with the foolish statement that* it has nothing to do with us at all (ital. added)." Now that is something else. But who charges dispensationalists with such a foolish statement? Certainly we do not! On the basis of II Tim. 3:16, dispensationalists will admit that certain portions of Scripture do have something to do with us, in that they are profitable for instruction. We may be instructed, for example, as to what belongs to Israel and what belongs

to the Church. But what belongs to the Jew, viz., the so called "earthly promise," does not *apply* to us. It cannot be said that such "promises" have *nothing* to do with us at all. They have *something* to do with us, but (so the theory goes) they do not specifically intend, and so are not *for*, us. The posed statement, because it contains an error, and because it refers to an absurdity not ours, is enervated.

Secondly, he writes:

The Reverend Harbach also writes: "Dispensationalism does go to the extreme of belittling the Old Testament, its importance and value." In contrast again, Dr. John F. Walvoord, president of Dallas Theological Seminary, Dallas, Texas, has written: "The recognition of proper dispensational distinctions has often been the means of opening a Bible previously closed. Laymen trained in non-dispensational interpretation have found great portions of the Old Testament without meaning. Once these were understood in their normal and natural sense as providing a prophetic program for the present and future, the Bible became an open book (*Good News Broadcaster*, December, 1966, p. 9)."

I believe that more people than I may be confused by the seemingly serious disparities between the Rev. Harbach and Doctors Luck and Walvoord as to the theological teachings of Dispensationalists.

Yours in Christ,  
Lionel Woodworth

Answer: The above dispensationalist remark happens to contain a rather general reference to "the Old Testament." The words *Old Testament* are used, but the term "Scripture" could just as well have been employed instead. The statement therefore does not specifically contend for the Old Testament. It rather implies that anyone unequipped with the benefit (?) of "dispensational distinctions" will find, not merely the Old Testament, but the Bible, a closed book, in fact, a meaningless book. But with this assumed superior light provided by these "proper distinctions," the Bible is claimed to become an open book, which not at all necessarily means that the Old Testament is given such esteem as views it a revelation integral with the New Testament, containing essentially the same message as the New, and directed equally with



the New to the Church of all ages. It is a belittling of the Old Testament and a serious error to teach that the Church began no earlier than Pentecost, and that therefore there was no Church throughout the Old Testament dispensations. Read further the forthcoming series on the subject. Anent the so called "theological teachings of Dispensationalists," it is rather well known that they have denounced all creeds, and have manifested a contempt for theology and theologians, largely because the historic creeds and theological systems contain nothing of the doctrines they deem essential and claim to have rediscovered. (Cp. *Prophecy and the Church*, O.T. Allis, Pres. & Ref. Pub., Phila., 1945, p. 16).

### CONCERNING THE COMING OF CHRIST

From the Junior Mr. and Mrs. Society of First Church, Grand Rapids, through its secretary, Mrs. Wm. J. Oomkes, I received the following interesting question:

Dear Editor:

At our last society meeting we had many different views on the following question: "What is the difference in saying, 'Christ is coming,' or, 'Christ shall come?'"

We as a society made the decision to send this question to the Question Box in the *Standard Bearer*.

As soon as possible, may we see an answer to our question for further discussion.

A 'thank you' in advance from the society.

### REPLY

By the first expression, 'Christ is coming,' is meant the truth that our Lord Jesus Christ is on the way, or, in the process of coming. This expression refers, therefore, to Jesus' coming throughout the history of the new dispensation, from the time of His cross and resurrection and exaltation until the final parousia. I can put this no better in a brief statement than by quoting Rev. H. Hoeksema, "Reformed Dogmatics," page 775: "Always and in all the events of history, of the history of the world and of the history of the church, in connection with the preaching of the gospel, Jesus is coming, and He is coming quickly. To this coming the Lord refers in Matthew 26:64: 'Jesus saith unto him Thou hast said; nevertheless I say unto you. Hereafter (better: henceforth, or; from now on, *ap'*

*arti*) ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.'" On page 776, in connection with the opening of the book with its seven seals, Revelation 5, is the following: "In that sense, then, namely, in the sense that Jesus executes the counsel of God in regard to the coming of the kingdom of heaven, He is always coming. He is coming in the preaching of the gospel, in war and rumors of war, in earthquakes and pestilences, in famines and want in death and destruction. And because this is the truth, the Scriptures speak of signs of His coming, signs that clearly and loudly proclaim throughout this dispensation that the Lord is coming again. And He comes quickly. There is no check. There is no restraint. There is no delay. Things develop as quickly as possible, until in the end He comes personally in the parousia, which we believe to be His personal and visible arrival, to close the history of this entire dispensation."

By the second expression, 'Christ shall come,' is meant the future and single event of Christ's final coming, His arrival, His parousia, His personal and visible coming to close the history of the world. To that coming as the end-event Scripture refers very often. Let me mention just a few passages from I Thessalonians. In 3:13 we read: "To the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints." In 4:15 this coming is spoken of as follows: "For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep." And in 5:23 it is also the final coming that is referred to: "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Perhaps part of your difficulty was caused by the fact that we sometimes loosely use the words "is coming" in a future sense. Strictly speaking, they do not denote the future idea, but the idea of process and progress.

The relation between these two aspects of Christ's coming is, of course, that the latter is the end and the culmination of the former.

In conclusion, I cannot resist the temptation to point out that here is a question on which "Reformed Dogmatics" would be very helpful to any society member. I only quoted snatches of it.

H.C.H.

The Hope Protestant Reformed Christian School will present the annual all-school program entitled, "Our Catholic Undoubted Christian Faith", on Thursday, March 23, at 8:00 p.m., in the First Protestant Reformed Church, Grand Rapids. Over 200 students in grades 1-9 will be involved (D.V.) in heralding the message of peace confessed in our Apostles Creed.

Miss A. Lubbers, Principal

The Northwest Iowa Protestant Reformed School, the Lord willing, will open its doors September of 1967. Two teachers are needed: one for grades 1 to 4, the other for grades 5 to 8. Prospective teachers may write:

Mr. Ray Brunsting

R. R. 2

Rock Valley, Iowa 51247

The Northwest Iowa Prot. Reformed School Board



## NEWS FROM OUR CHURCHES—

### REPORT OF CLASSIS EAST

Sessions held January 4 and February 8, 1967  
At Hope Church, Grand Rapids

Rev. G. C. Lubbers led in the opening devotions, and after the credentials were accepted, declared the classis properly constituted. All the churches were represented by two delegates each.

Rev. M. Schipper, following the order of rotation, then presided, while the Rev. Lubbers recorded the minutes.

The chairman welcomed the delegates, especially the Rev. J. Kortering, who was meeting with us for the first time.

The brethren R. Kamminga and A. Haveman were appointed to serve on the Finance Committee for these sessions of classis.

The minutes of the October 5th and the December 7th sessions of classis were read and approved. The reports of the Stated Clerk and the Classical Committee were read and approved. The Classical Committee was mandated once more to present a copy of its Constitution to the next classical meeting.

Holland and Randolph requested classical appointments, and the committee: Rev. G. Van Baren, B. Windemuller, and P. Zandst a was appointed to prepare the schedule, which was later adopted as follows:

HOLLAND - Jan. 15 - G. Van Baren Jan. 29 - G. Lubbers Feb. 19 - H. Veldman Feb. 26 - J. Kortering Mar. 5 - R. Harbach March 19 - M. Schipper Apr. 2 - G. Van Baren Apr. 9 - G. Lubbers.

RANDOLPH - Jan. 15 - J. Kortering Jan. 22 - H. Veldman Feb. 5 - R. Harbach Feb. 19 - G. Van Baren Feb. 26 - M. Schipper Mar. 12 - G. Lubbers Mar. 19 - H. Veldman Apr. 2 - R. Harbach Apr. 9 - J. Kortering.

Requests for Subsidy were presented by the Consistories of Holland and Kalamazoo. The Committee: Rev. G. Lubbers and Elders W. Clason, T. Elzinga, and A. Talsma was appointed to advise on these requests. The committee later advised classis to approve the requests and to forward to synod. Classis followed this advice.

Classis then went into executive session to read three protests. Two committees were appointed to study these protests, and to tender their advice on the continued session of classis on February 8th.

Out of executive session, classis proceeded to vote for delegates to synod, with the following chosen:

#### MINISTERS

##### PRIMI:

J. Kortering  
G. Van Baren  
H. Veldman  
M. Schipper

##### SECUNDI:

R. Harbach for Kortering and Schipper  
G. Lubbers for Van Baren and Veldman

#### ELDERS

##### PRIMI:

J. Kalsbeek  
D. Langeland  
G. Pipe  
H. Zwak

##### SECUNDI:

T. Engelsma  
W. Kamps  
F. Ondersma  
A. Talsma

Rev. M. Schipper was chosen primus Delegate Ad Examina for three years, And Rev. J. Kortering was chosen secundus for three years and Rev. G. Van Baren secundus for two years.

Classis decided to hold the April 5th session in Southeast Church.

Questions of Article 41 of the Church Order were asked and answered satisfactorily.

Prof. H. Hanko closed this session with prayer.

#### February 8th session

Rev. G. Lubbers led in devotions. And Rev. H. Veldman presided in the absence of Rev. M. Schipper, who had entered the hospital for surgery.

Elder H. Vander Kolk took the place of Elder B. Windemuller, and Elder H. Ophoff took the place of Rev. M. Schipper as delegates.

Elder W. Kamps was granted an advisory vote.

Classis then entered into executive session to treat the reports of the two committees previously appointed.

The morning session was closed by Elder R. Kamminga, and the afternoon session was opened by Rev. H. Veldman, and Elder W. Kamps closed the afternoon session, while the Rev. H. Veldman opened the evening session.

The Finance Committee again tendered its report re expenses, which classis approved.

Elder W. Clason reported that he had thanked the Marthas of Hope Church for their excellent catering services.

After the chairman spoke a few fitting words to the classis, the Rev. R. C. Harbach closed the evening session with thanks to God.

Rev. M. Schipper, S.C.

The second in the Lecture Series was held in First Church of Grand Rapids Feb. 16 with Prof. H. Hanko at the lectern. Rev. G. Van Baren, in the absence of Rev. M. Schipper, led in the opening devotions and introduced the speaker. The Radio Choir, under the direction of Mr. Roland Petersen, rendered two numbers, and Mrs. C. Lubbers, of Southeast Church, was at the organ. The audience, many of them visitors, enjoyed a well-planned speech which set forth the Scriptural truth called, "Unconditional Election", the second of the Five Points of Calvinism. The third in this series is scheduled for March 16, and will feature Prof. H. C. Hoeksema as lecturer.

\* \* \*

Rev. M. Schipper is recuperating satisfactorily from his recent surgery and has already been back in church --in one of the pews, not on the pulpit--for two services Feb. 26. Due to his forced idleness, the Sunday services of Southeast Church and of Hope Church were re-scheduled in order to fill those pulpits for their four services. Such procedure was patterned after the arrangements so often made in the Edgerton-Hull-Doon combine.

*Do You Know* that Rev. H. Hoeksema's *Dogmatics* is written in such simple easy-to-read style that we laymen encounter little or no difficulty in understanding the eternal truths set forth therein? Borrow a copy from a friend and in one perusal you will decide that you want to buy one for your very own!

... see you in church

J.M.F.